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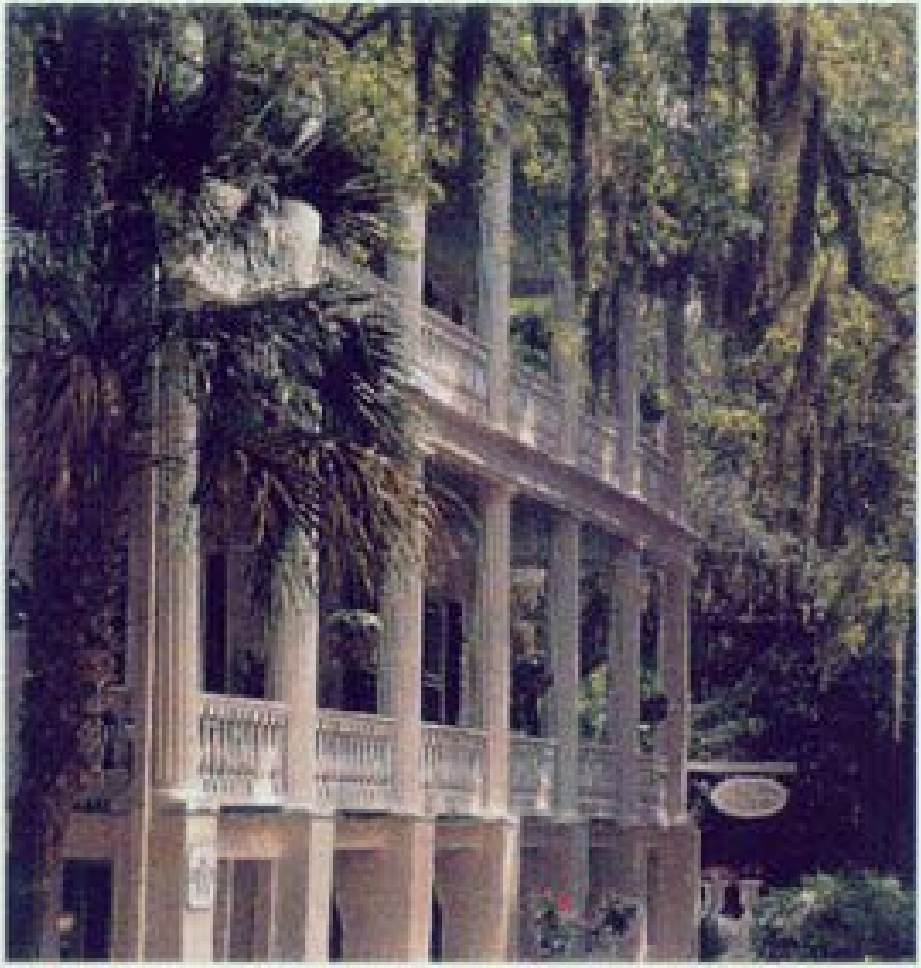
ROMANTIC WEEKENDS

The Carolinas & The Georgia Coast



Norman & Kathy Renouf

VISIT…

ROMANTIC WEEKENDS

THE CAROLINAS & THE GEORGIA COAST

Norman & Kathy Renouf

HUNTER

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Dedication

With love and gratitude to our parents, Anne, Carrie and Phil, who support us faithfully. And, in loving memory of Herbert, who taught us a passionate love for life and is an inspiration to us still.

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Introduction

The impetus for this guide is pure and simple: romance. If it weren't for romance – our own romance, that is – this book would not have been written. It was nearly 25 years ago that we first met, fell in love and married. For reasons that even we don't understand, we separated shortly afterward. Leading our separate lives on different continents, we had no contact for over 17 years. A totally unrelated trip across the ocean and a meeting that occurred despite incredible odds led to a friendship that, through many twists and turns, sparked something we thought we had lost forever. On March 4, 1995 we remarried in the same church where we had wed nearly 20 years before. Our pastor remarked on that day that our relationship was proof that "God was a God of second chances."

Like everyone else, we enjoy getting away for the weekend. When both of you work (one of you at home) and there are teenaged boys and girls always around, it is difficult to find those quiet – and very necessary – moments to enjoy each other. We decided that this time we owed it to ourselves and to those around us to keep our romance strong and fresh. To this end, we determined to devote several weekends a year exclusively to each other – getting away from the normal routine and the pressures of regular life.

We began to scour the bookshops for guides that offered interesting suggestions about unique and romantic adventures for couples. We had hoped to find one that was easy to read and entertaining as well, but we searched in vain. We realized then that we had stumbled on a gap in the market. Given Norman's extensive travel-writing experience, we did the only logical thing – we wrote a book ourselves. That book, highlighting Virginia, Maryland and Washington, DC, was the first in what has since been expanded into a *Romantic Weekends* series. Three printings of that guide sold out and a thoroughly revised version was published in the spring of 1999. Encouraged by that success, we have now expanded our romantic horizons to the

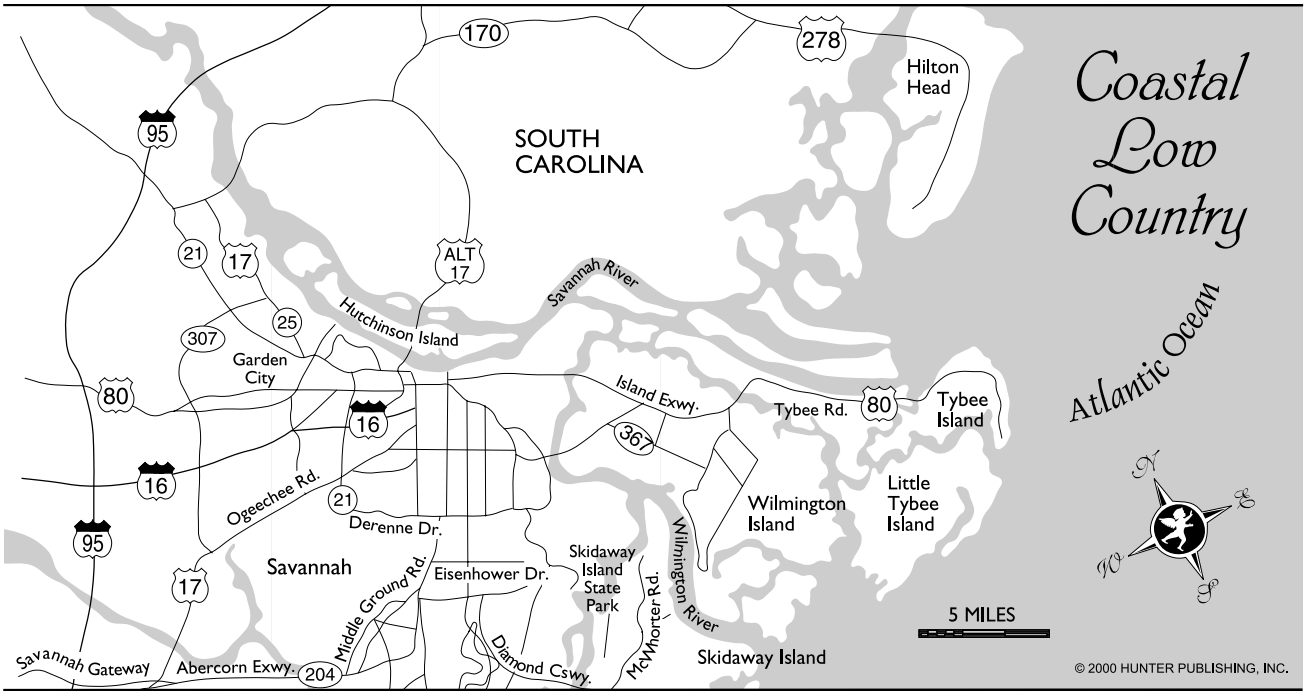
Carolinas and the Georgia Coast, offering a host of new adventures to romantic weekenders.

The right accommodations are a very important ingredient in an enjoyable weekend. You will find in these chapters an eclectic mix: secluded log cabins, grand hotels in major cities, quaint inns, luxurious seaside resorts and even an African-style safari tent camp tucked high in the mountains of North Carolina. Of course, location alone doesn't ensure a romantic experience. In our travels through the Carolinas and along the Georgia Coast, we have searched for areas that offer not only interesting accommodations, but fun and romantic things to do and, of course, enticing restaurants. Some of the areas we have chosen will be familiar. In these instances, we have suggested fresh alternatives that we hope will appeal. And that has been our primary goal: to ferret out spots that most couples would not have the time or resources to find themselves and to provide our readers with general descriptions and comprehensive contact information, including, whenever possible, fax, e-mail and website information.

There are some tokens of romance that are just about universal. A dozen long-stemmed red roses, a gift of fine lingerie, a tour in a horse-drawn carriage, a chilled bottle of champagne – all speak the language of love. In each chapter, we have included information on where to find (or arrange for) these special touches.

In many cases, what one person considers romantic may not appeal to another. So we have taken great care to include options that will suit couples of all ages and interests. Once you realize how many wonderful choices are available, the two of you may just get adventurous and try something new.

We hope you have as much fun on these trips as we had researching them. There are lots of things to discover out there, but the most important of these is your continued discovery of each other.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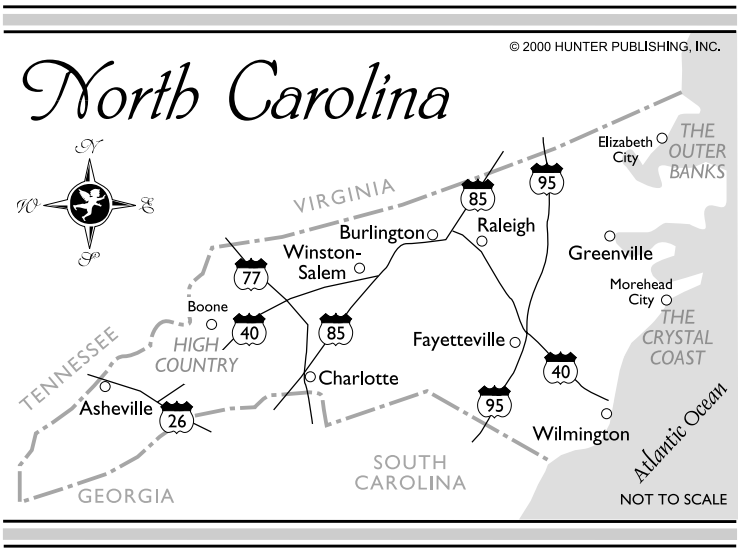
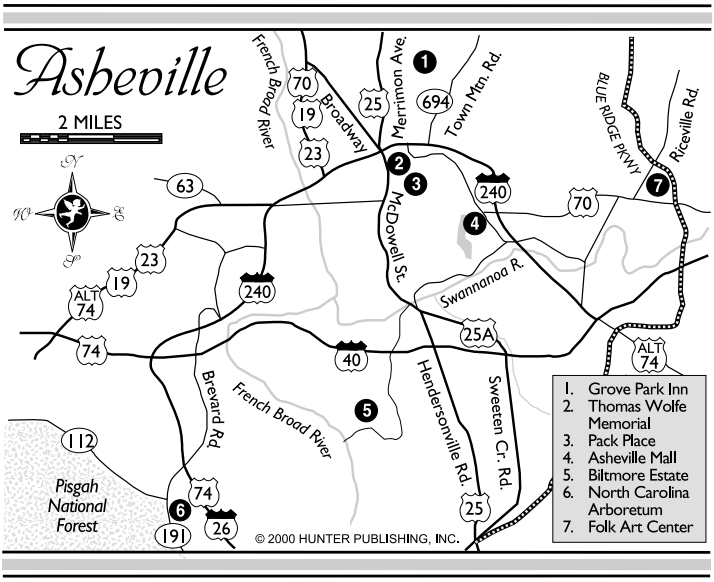


North Carolina

Asheville

History

A little over two centuries ago, in 1784, a young pioneer William Davidson, along with his wife and young children, traveled through the Blue Ridge mountains in search of a suitable place to settle. They decided on a majestic site at the convergence of the Blue Ridge and Great Smoky Mountains, with the highest peaks east of the Mississippi nearby, where they could breath the crystal clean mountain air. How many people still dream of such a lifestyle today? A permanent settlement founded a year later proliferated so rapidly that, on December 5, 1791, a legislative act established Buncombe County, named in honor of Revolutionary War hero Colonel Edward



Buncombe. Shortly thereafter, an entrepreneurial fellow by the name of John Burton managed to obtain state land grants and established thereon a sizeable settlement, named Morristown and consisting of 42 half-acre lots. Even at the prohibitive price of $2.50 each, he had no trouble whatsoever selling each and every one. At the time of its incorporation in 1797, this tiny village was officially christened Asheville, in honor of the then governor of North Carolina, Samuel Ashe. By that time it was a favorite stopover point for Tennessee drivers taking their herds of hogs, turkey and cattle to the Atlantic coast.

The population of Asheville grew quite slowly, reaching only 500 by 1840. The mid-1800s, however, saw the arrival of the Asheville and Greenville Plank Road and a corresponding expansion. The town attracted the attention of the wealthy throughout the South, who frequented it as a health resort. Such graceful elegance, however, was soon shattered when Asheville assumed a vital military role for the Confederacy during the Civil War. In fact, the Buncombe Rifles were the first company of soldiers from west of the Blue Ridge Mountains. And when they marched on April 18, 1861, the flag they carried was fashioned from the silk dresses of the town belles!

In 1880 the railroad crossed the Eastern Continental Divide into Western North Carolina, and its tracks brought money, affluence and power to Asheville and the surrounding area. It was also instrumental, although inadvertently so, in attracting a young New York aristocrat who was so thoroughly enchanted by the area that he used his inherited fortune to build, and lavishly furnish, what is still today America's largest structure built as a private residence – Biltmore House. Visitors come from all over the world to see Biltmore and no romantic weekend in Asheville would be complete without experiencing its glorious, though perhaps anachronistic, splendor. More about the amazing Biltmore later.

In the early part of the 20th century came an explosion in Asheville's economic growth. A number of diverse, and often fascinating, structures still stand as testimony to that prosperous era. In 1909, Spanish designer Rafael Guastavino constructed the St. Lawrence Roman Catholic Church, recently designated as a minor basilica. Besides the more obvious Spanish Baroque towers overlaid with colored tiles, the pièce de résistance is a 52-by-82-foot dome. Held together by a technique called "cohesive construction," this has the distinction of being the largest unsupported tile dome in the United States.

Shortly thereafter, 1913 saw the birth of the imposing Grove Park Inn upon a hill overlooking the city. It has been welcoming the rich and famous ever since. You will find more details on the Grove Park Inn in the *Sweet Dreams* section. Not to be overlooked either are the circa-1926 Georgia white marble façade of the Pack Memorial Library, and the more austere brick and Tennessee limestone Courthouse dedicated on December 1, 1928. Finally, providing a whimsical contrast are numerous art deco buildings.

Asheville also boasts an impressive literary background. Thomas Wolfe, author of *Look Homeward, Angel* and *You Can't Go Home Again*, was born in this city. Although his relationship with the citizenry wasn't always cordial, Asheville hosts an annual four-day Thomas Wolfe Festival around the author's October 3 birthday. A state historic site known as the Thomas Wolfe Memorial is found on Woodfin Street within a 29-room

boarding house called the Old Kentucky Home, operated at one time by Wolfe's mother.

O. Henry, the acclaimed short story writer, took for his second wife an Asheville native, Sarah Coleman. Having been born in Greensboro, North Carolina, O. Henry was not particularly impressed by the mountains, much preferring to find his inspiration on the streets of New York City. He led an eventful and not always legal existence, dying on June 5, 1910 in his beloved New York of cirrhosis of the liver. His remains lie not far from those of Thomas Wolfe at Asheville's Riverside Cemetery.

Finally, a more quixotic and novel tale is that of the famed author of such classics as *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender is the Night*, F. Scott Fitzgerald. He ensconced himself in Room 441 of the Grove Park Inn during much of 1935 and 1936 while, supposedly, caring for his wife who was receiving psychiatric treatment at the local Highland Hospital. He still had plenty of free time, however, to establish a well-earned reputation for drinking and womanizing.

As with many other places across the nation the good times ended abruptly at the end of the 1920s. The stock market crash and the ensuing Depression hit Asheville particularly hard. In fact, its per capita debt was the highest of any city in the country. Unlike other cities that chose to default on Depression-era bonds and liabilities, the Asheville authorities were determined to pay back every dime of the city's debts – a burden borne until 1977. This left Asheville cash-poor for generations, but – perhaps as a reward for its honesty – such economic travails served to preserve the city's architectural heritage. In the 1950s and 1960s many cities, unencumbered by such debt, utilized their financial resources to experiment with urban renewal projects. Now, most look back with regret at the cultural legacy they so eagerly destroyed. In the present era of industrial contraction and its subsequent downsizing, many cities struggle to add attractions that will entice tourists' dollars. On the other hand, Asheville, the largest city in western North Carolina, with a population around 69,000, is an attraction in itself. In addition, it is consistently ranked one of the finest places to live and most attractive to visit.

Things to Do

The two premier attractions in Asheville, besides the town itself, stand in direct contrast to one another. The glorious **Biltmore Estate** is a tribute to man's ingenuity while the surrounding mountains stand in majestic declaration of nature's sovereign beauty. Before setting out to explore either, the adventurous may first want to experience them from a more sweeping perspective. **Sky Tours, Inc.**, ☎ 828-251–5379 or 800-770–5379, 76 S. Bear Creek Road, invites you to discover Asheville from the vantage point of a hot air balloon. Flights last about an hour and cost $125 per person. Our recommendation would be a Champagne Flight. Sky Tours operates between May 1 and the middle of November, and reservations are required to ensure a flight on your day of choice. If, however, your weekend really takes off in a rush of inspiration, give them a call – there might be a last minute cancellation.

The Vanderbilt name, not just in the United States but also around the world, is synonymous with wealth. Not so well known, though, is the fact that the family's first fortune, and its second also, was made by Cornelius Vanderbilt (1794-1877). The story goes that, at the age of 16 years, he borrowed $100 from his mother to launch a ferry service across the New York Harbor. This enterprise eventually grew into a fleet of more than 100 steamboats that traveled the seas as far as Central America and Europe and earned Cornelius the sobriquet "Commodore." Some 50 years later he earned his second fortune investing in railroads, including the famous New York Central. Resolving to utilize his fortune for the benefit of those less fortunate, Cornelius initiated the family's tradition of philanthropy in 1873 with a contribution of $1 million to Central University, a Methodist School in Nashville, Tennessee. The institution, not surprisingly, was soon renamed Vanderbilt University. Cornelius' family multiplied almost as rapidly as his fortune and he reigned as patriarch over a clan of 13 children, 337 grandchildren and 27 great-grandchildren. To accommodate his brood and for other, more aesthetic reasons, Cornelius established another family tradition – a propensity

for building luxurious residences. This point, as we will see, was not lost on one of his grandchildren, George Washington Vanderbilt, whose father, William Henry Vanderbilt, in 1881, built a 59-room mansion at 640 Fifth Avenue that was the largest and most splendid in all of Manhattan. And, George, born in 1862, was the only one of the eight children living at home when the house, which he was eventually to inherit following his mother's death in 1896, was completed.

Being a quiet, intellectual type, George started his own collection of art and books at a young age. Attracted to the world of travel and learning, he made his first trip to Europe at age 10, and subsequently journeyed to Europe, Asia or Africa about once a year throughout the remainder of his adult life. But it was while traveling in the mountains of western North Carolina in the late 1880s that he glimpsed what was to become his destiny. Immediately attracted to the area, he decided that Asheville should be the site of his country estate and began buying up what eventually totaled 125,000 acres of forest, park and gardens. In 1889, with the assistance of two of the most famous designers of the 19th century, architect Richard Morris Hunt and landscape designer Frederick Law Olmsted, George Vanderbilt set about the mammoth undertaking of constructing a mansion the likes of which had never before been seen in the United States to be set within glorious gardens, farms and woodlands. Using the ornamented architectural style of the French Renaissance and adapting different elements from three famous early 16th-century Loire Valley chateaux – Blois, Chenonceau and Chambord – designer Hunt created a massive, and massively impressive, four-story stone house with a tremendous 780-foot front façade.

Such splendor was more than equally matched inside the house. Within the four acres of floor space are 250 rooms, including: 34 master bedrooms, 43 bathrooms, 65 fireplaces and three kitchens, not to mention the Tapestry Gallery, numerous sitting rooms, a billiard room, gymnasium, bowling alley and an indoor swimming pool. The central design feature is the grand 102-step, four-floor high stone staircase ornamented by an immense chandelier at its center. Further embellish-

ments include a vast collection of art and furniture and approximately 23,000 books collected from over 13 countries. The house, at its completion, was one of the most innovative and technologically advanced residences in the world. It boasted unheard of luxuries such as hot and cold running water, elevators, central heating, a fire alarm system, refrigeration, electric light bulbs and 10 Bell telephones.

On Christmas Eve, 1895, following six years of arduous construction, George Washington Vanderbilt opened the doors of Biltmore – a name that was a combination of the region Bildt in Holland, where the Vanderbilt family originated, and More, an old English word meaning rolling hills.

In 1930, Biltmore was opened to the public. A privately owned property, thus receiving no government support, the operation and upkeep of Biltmore is reliant upon revenues collected from visitors. Rates are $29.95 for adults and $22.50 for young people ages 10 to 15. Visitors take a self-guided tour through four floors of Biltmore House, including living and entertainment areas, the kitchens, indoor recreation areas and the servants' quarters, as well as through Biltmore's 250 acres of landscaped gardens and grounds. Currently, the estate consists of 8,000 acres. Many of the original 125,000 acres were appropriated to form the nucleus of the Pisgah

National Forest after George Washington Vanderbilt's death in 1914. Also included in the fee is admission to Biltmore's esteemed winery, the most visited in the United States, housed within Vanderbilt's original calving barn. This tour is also self-guided, taking in the production areas and including (for those 21 or older) a complimentary wine tasting. There are also numerous shopping and dining experiences at various sites around the estate. If current plans materialize, by the spring of 2001 there will be a new 200-room deluxe inn on the Biltmore Estate.

A variety of special events take place at Biltmore throughout the year. These include **Summer Evening Concerts**, **Christmas at Biltmore Estate**, **Candlelight Christmas Evenings** and the **Festival of Flowers**. As you would expect,

these carry special admission rates. More information may be obtained by contacting the estate at One North Pack Square, Asheville, NC 28801, ☎ 800-543-2961. Website www.biltmore.com.

The Biltmore Estate is located on US Highway 25, just north of Exit 50 or 50B off I-40. Even though most visitors will be expecting grandness in size and style, it is still overwhelming to find that the approach road to Biltmore House is three miles long! The reception and ticket center and the estate are open daily, January to March, 9 am to 5 pm, and April to December from 8:30 am to 5 pm. The Biltmore House itself opens daily throughout the year, from 9 am to 5:30 pm. The winery keeps a slightly different schedule. From January through March it is open Monday-Saturday, 11 am-6 pm, and on Sunday from noon to 6 pm. From April through December, it is open Monday to Saturday from 11 am to 7 pm, and on Sunday from noon to 7 pm.

Of course, the proximity of the **Blue Ridge** and **Great Smokies** is a major attraction for visitors to Asheville. In the fall, the city's geographical location – 2,200 feet in elevation, on a plateau divided by the French Broad River and surrounded by many mountains over 5,000 feet – makes it the premier Southeastern destination for autumn leaf watchers. The elevation of the surrounding mountains allows the color show to last up to six weeks, quite a bit longer than elsewhere. The leaves begin to turn in late September on the highest peaks around 6,000 feet. The change then moves slowly down toward Asheville, at 2,500 feet, throughout October, with fall finally taking its leave in early November at Chimney Rock some 1,200 feet lower. You can imagine that such a glorious display attracts huge numbers of visitors, so if you plan a weekend here in the very romantic fall, we suggest you make arrangements well in advance.

If the sound of babbling mountain streams brings thoughts of fly-fishing, **Hunter Banks Co. Fly Fishing & Hunting Outfitters**, ☎ 828-252-3005 or 800-227-6732, conveniently located at Exit 4-C on I-240 in downtown Asheville at 29 Montford Avenue, offers two interesting options. If you prefer to wade and

hike in the lakes, then a day-long fishing trip will cost you $225 per couple. You will meet your guide at the store in the morning and return to the shop by 6 pm. Transportation is provided, as is equipment (except leaders and flies), along with a streamside lunch. Variations in the schedule can be arranged with the guide in advance. If you prefer to fish from a boat, a dinghy actually, then Hunter Banks Co. will take you to the larger rivers on the tailwaters of East Tennessee for $295 a couple. Even if you aren't particularly interested in fishing, it is still worth a visit to this store, a certified Orvis outfitter. Besides the widest range of fly-fishing products in the area, you will also find an array of interesting sports clothes, sunglasses, waterproof coats and accessories, decoys, Swiss Victorinox knives and many other goods.

A most interesting way to become acquainted with Asheville is to follow **The Urban Trail**, ☎ 828-259-5855, which explores five distinct themes in Asheville's social history. This is comprised of 30 stops, each identified by a pink granite marker embedded in the sidewalk and heralded by distinctive art objects, along a winding path through the historic downtown area. To assist you in fully appreciating this 1.6-mile circular guided tour, an informative brochure is available at the Visitors Center. Two places on the tour are of particular interest. **Pack Place**, a newly renovated collection of buildings from the late 19th and early 20th century, is now home to the **Asheville Art Museum**, the 500-seat **Diana Wortham Theater**, the **Colburn Gem and Mineral Museum** and the **Health Adventure** – 11 galleries filled with unique hands-on exhibits that offer fun and educational learning opportunities for young and old alike. The **Thomas Wolfe Memorial**, ☎ 828-253-8304, fax 252-8171 or http://home.att.net/~wolfememorial, at 52 N. Market Street, was the author's boyhood home and the setting for *Look Homeward Angel*. Unfortunately, the home itself was closed in 1999 for repairs necessitated by fire damage. Check before your visit to see if it has reopened. The Visitor's Center, however, remained open.

If you visit Asheville on the third weekend in July, be prepared for a hubbub of activity and make arrangements for accommo-

dations many months in advance. Back in 1979, in an effort to bring citizens back to the streets of downtown Asheville, a festival that was dubbed (for no reason that can be identified) **Bele Chere** was instituted. It has succeeded beyond anyone's wildest expectations. The three-day festival now attracts as many as 350,000 people, making it the Southeast's largest, free outdoor street festival.

Sweet Dreams

The **Haywood Park Hotel & Promenade**, ☎ 828-252-2522, 800-228-2522, fax 253-0481, e-mail hotel@haywoodpark.com or www.haywoodpark.com, at One Battery Park Avenue right in the heart of downtown Asheville, has an interesting background. In the early 1920s, E.W. Grove, builder also of the Grove Park Inn, in redeveloping the area around Haywood Street and Battery Porter Hill, included a classical-style department store and hotel. Sixty years later, in 1985, a complete renovation resulted in the Haywood Park Hotel, an all-suite establishment that has earned for itself a reputation as one of Asheville's finest hotels. This is the place to be if you want space. Each of the 33 suites is individually decorated and embellished with original artwork, recessed ceilings, crown moldings and handmade accessories. Suites fall into three categories. The Superior Suite, double-occupancy $165, features a large room with sitting area, TV, wet bar and small refrigerator. The bathroom, designed in Spanish marble, has a garden tub, separate glassed-in shower and TV. The Master Suite, double-occupancy $180, features a large room with sitting area, TV, wet bar and small refrigerator. The bathroom, also designed in Spanish marble, has a two-person Jacuzzi and TV. Finally, our recommendation, The Grand Suite, at $325 double occupancy, is grand indeed – as large as any we have seen. Expect to find spacious and separate bedroom and sitting areas with attractive views from both, a wet bar and a small refrigerator. The Spanish marble bathroom features an oversized two-person Jacuzzi, a separate glassed-in shower and

fluffy robes. You will also find remote-controlled TVs in the sitting room, bedroom and bathroom.

The hotel also offers complimentary valet parking, bell services, turndown service each night with handmade chocolate truffles, and a deluxe Continental breakfast delivered to your room along with a copy of *USA Today* each morning. In addition, an excellent fitness center is available for your use 24 hours a day.

The **Grove Park Inn**, ☎ 828-252–2711, (800-438-5800 or www.groveparkinn.com, can only be described in the superlative. It is Asheville's largest hotel, its most architecturally interesting, claims the most intriguing history and boasts the best view in Asheville.

Near the end of the 19th century, pharmaceutical company owner Edwin Wiley Grove, famous for, among other things, the production of "Grove's Tasteless Chill Tonic," found Asheville's summer climate beneficial to his health. He purchased land in the area, much of which was on Sunset Mountain overlooking the city. Subsequently, he had the idea of building a unique world-class resort there, but was unable to find an architect who could grasp his concept. Surprisingly, it was his son-in-law, Fred L. Seely, who produced a sketch of a hotel to be built entirely of native stone. So impressed was Grove that he persuaded Fred to move to Asheville and turn his dream into reality. On July 12, 1913, after a little more than a year of construction, the opening of the Grove Park Inn received national attention.

The six-story façade, built of granite boulders with a solid concrete and tile red roof, is impressive enough, but the lobby, 120 feet by 80 feet and known as the Great Hall, is even more so. The boulders that form the walls are immense, especially those surrounding the two massive, world-famous fireplaces – each large enough to burn 10-foot logs! Mr. Seely, the son-in-law, eventually obtained the lease on the 150-room hotel, and his tenure, from 1914 to 1927, became known as the "Austere Years." This was not because of a lack of any creature comforts, but rather was a reflection of Seely's strict rules. Children were discouraged, pets absolutely forbidden and no noise was per-

mitted after 10:30 pm! That conservatism must have been well appreciated in those times and afterwards, however, as the guest list included such luminaries as Thomas Edison, Harvey Firestone, Henry Ford, Woodrow Wilson, the Roosevelts and Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Acrimony developed between Grove, who died in 1927, and Seely, who was removed from control soon afterwards. In 1928 Grove's wife sold the inn and that, combined with the onset of the Depression Years, saw Grove Park struggle to maintain its standards. After the United States entered World War II, the government leased the inn and used it as an internment center for Axis countries' diplomats from March to June of 1942. After that it became a rest and rehabilitation center for American Naval officers and wounded sailors. This took a tremendous toll on the facilities, and the in postwar years guests found that the standards and conditions had badly deteriorated. The property changed management several times until 1955, when it finally found the benefactor it desperately needed in the person of Charles Sammons, a Dallas entrepreneur. Over the next 33 years, until his death in 1988, he financed a comprehensive restoration and expansion program that added, among other things, two new wings and an adjacent golf course. In 1991 the inn became a subsidiary of Sammons Enterprises, Inc., which has continued to maintain the facility at the highest standards. Today, The Grove Park Inn, on the National Register of Historic Places since 1973, is a 510-room resort hotel with four restaurants, two ballrooms and a country club that holds AAA Four-Diamond and Mobil Four-Star ratings.

Each and every room is suitably luxurious for weekend romance. The most discerning, though, will opt for one of the 28 rooms on the private, adults-only Club Floor. A stay here offers extras such as pampered service, Jacuzzi tubs, complimentary newspapers, fresh flowers and bathrobes. A Continental breakfast is served each morning in the deluxe Club Floor Lounge, where complimentary cocktails and goodies are also offered each evening. Club Floor rates vary from $265 to $375 ($375 to $570 for a one-bedroom suite), depending upon the time you visit.

But to make the weekend unforgettable, consider one of the Grove Park Inn's two extra special packages. The Grand Romance includes two nights on the Club Floor, a dinner for two, a bottle of champagne and Grove Park Inn logo glasses, a floral bouquet, and a tray of in-room delicacies. This package starts at $725 per couple for the first three months of the year and is $865 thereafter, both exclusive of tax and gratuities. If that is not romantic and lavish enough, try the Great Gatsby package. You will spend two nights in a Club Floor room with a canopied bed, custom-designed floral arrangements, and luxurious toiletries – including special oils, bath beads, flowers and candles. You will be treated to a gourmet meal in the Grove Park Inn's Four-Diamond Horizons restaurant, champagne and a tray of in-room delicacies, a heart-shaped chocolate box, a specially prepared picnic basket, and a commemorative portrait in a special frame. It isn't inexpensive – $1,245 or $1,350 per couple depending upon the season – but to celebrate an extra-special occasion or to make an ordinary occasion extra-special, it's a small price to pay. Five days' advance notice is required when booking packages.

Just before closing out our research we received a press package from the Grove Park Inn Resort announcing a $24 million, 18-month property improvement. This includes a renovated Sports Center with indoor pool, re-tiling of the resort's historic Main Inn roof and new outdoor tennis courts. The centerpiece of this plan, however, is development of an amazing new complex to open in the summer of 2000 that will create the Grove Park Inn Resort & Spa. The very ambitious E.W. Grove declared of his creation that this inn was "built not for the present alone, but for the admiration of generations yet unborn." In fulfillment of his legacy, construction is underway on what is promised as the finest spa in the United States – 40,000 square feet of opulent spa space dedicated to pampering the 3,000 or so square inches of the human body.

The Spa's designers, drawing their inspiration from the dazzling beauty of surrounding mountains and not wishing to obstruct any of Grove Park's breathtaking views, conceived a largely underground complex built into the face of majestic

Sunset Mountain. Access to the facility will be by way of subterranean tunnels from the inn's Vanderbilt and Sammons Wings or, from the grounds, along a pathway through newly constructed waterscaped gardens with a cascading waterfall. The interior, still bringing the outdoors in by way of massive glass skylights and panoramic views of the Blue Ridge Valley, will feature numerous amenities, with 20 treatment rooms – including wet, dry, and hydrotherapy treatment rooms; saunas; steam rooms and inhalation rooms. There will also be a number of pools, one with high rock walls, two waterfalls and a glass atrium bathing the interior with natural light. Look also for plunge pools; therapeutic whirlpools; a full-service beauty salon offering hair styling, manicures and pedicures; state-of-the-art locker rooms and lounges with cozy fireplaces. Of special interest to romantic weekenders will be the couples treatment room, seen frequently in Europe but very seldom in the States. The Grove Park Inn has established a 24-hour Spa Hotline at ☎ 828-262-5SPA for those wanting additional information, or check out their progress at http://gpi-GW.ash.newera.net/spacam/.

From the 1870s until the Great Depression, Asheville was a boomtown where wealthy industrialists and real estate developers built an array of fine properties. Many of these beautiful Victorian era homes still stand today along the tidy tree-lined streets of the Historic Montford District, a short drive from downtown. One of these homes was built in the late 1890s for Osella B. and Leva Wright, and their personal story, one of tragedy and romance, will surely enthrall you. From 1914 to 1970 this lovely home, once known fondly by residents as "Faded Glory," served as a boarding house. In 1987, the structure underwent more than a year of careful restoration before opening, in 1988, as **The Wright Inn & Carriage House**, ☎ 828-251-0789, 800-552-5724 or fax 251-0929, 235 Pearson Drive. The current owners, Carol and Art Wenczel, purchased the property in 1994. The inn, one of the finest examples of Queen Anne architecture in Western North Carolina and listed on the National Register of Historical Places, has been

awarded the distinguished Triple Crown by the American Bed & Breakfast Association.

Carol and Art take particular pleasure in greeting their guests in the charming Coleman Parlor that features period furnishings and handcrafted oak trim. Accommodation is in one of eight guest rooms or the elegant Wright Suite. All choices have private bath; are richly appointed with turn-of-the-century antiques and family heirlooms, lovely linens and down quilts; and offer the other expected amenities of telephone, television, hairdryer, etc.

We recommend that romantic couples consider the Wright Suite. The sleeping area is large, with a carved mahogany queen-sized bed and fireplace. A sitting area features large windows, fainting couch and rocking chair; and there is a private breakfast room with outside entrance.

For all guests of the inn proper, a full breakfast, when weather permits, is served in the Gazebo, where afternoon tea and cookies may also be enjoyed. At other times, breakfast and tea are served before an inviting fire in the quaint Willows Drawing Room. When you head out to explore, bicycles are provided for your use and, innovatively, a Sony Walkman is on hand with a historic-walk tape for touring downtown Asheville.

If you are looking for space and the ultimate in privacy, the detached Carriage House features living room, dining room, kitchen, three bedrooms and two baths, although maid service and breakfast are not provided for guests of the cottage.

Regular rates range from $115 to $235, but inquire when making a reservation about the various discounts offered in winter (January 22 through March 31) and for guests staying more than four days. The Wright Inn is a non-smoking establishment and state law prohibits pets.

The **Richmond Hill Inn**, ☎ 828-252-7313, 888-742-4554, fax 252-8726 or www.richmondhillinn.com, 87 Richmond Hill Drive, is situated upon an attractive bluff overlooking the French Broad River just a few minutes from downtown Asheville. The stately mansion was constructed as the residence of Richmond Pearson, one of the area's most prominent 19th-century citizens, and his equally pedigreed wife, Gabrielle Thomas Pearson.

Richmond Pearson, born on January 26, 1852 into one of the oldest families in North Carolina, was valedictorian of Princeton's class of 1872 before studying law with his father and being admitted to the North Carolina Bar. He then returned to Princeton to obtain a Master of Arts degree. A devoted reader of classic literature, he was fluent in French, German and Italian. At the young age of 23 years, President Grant appointed him United States Consul in Belgium, a post he held for three years before returning to practice law. In 1882, he married Gabrielle Thomas of Virginia, described by *The Richmond Times Dispatch* as one of the city's most popular belles and well-known for her uncommon beauty. Three years later his mind turned towards politics, and he was elected to the North Carolina Legislature in 1885.

Soon afterwards, in 1889, the Pearsons built the grand Victorian Queen Anne-style mansion known as Richmond Hill, one of the most elegant and innovative residences of its time. The grand entrance hall, Oak Hall, was paneled in rich native oak and featured a 12-foot ceiling with exposed oak beams. From its rear rose an impressive, multi-landing staircase, above which were three tall windows accented by Belcher stained-glass windows. Spacious rooms incorporating no fewer than 10 master fireplaces with neoclassical revival mantels were a showcase for the Pearson's collections acquired on journeys around the world. These included rare pieces of art, opulent furnishings, Oriental rugs, and some 3,000 books that found a

home in the mansion's library. In addition, there was an incredible array of one-of-a-kind treasures – such as a pink, satin-lined box decorated with rose-cut diamonds, a photograph of the Shah's father given to Pearson by the Shah of Iran and a Greek marble head unearthed at the Greek colony of Paestum. On the cutting edge of technology, the home had running water, a communication system, and a pulley-operated elevator for transporting baggage from one floor to another. The home was surrounded by rolling grounds with glorious gardens, a greenhouse, vineyards, orchards, and an ice and wood house. The estate, almost entirely self-supporting, included dairy and pasturelands as well. In other words, this was a perfect place for entertaining and, despite the fact that it was a half-hour carriage ride from Asheville, it was the center of that city's social life and political activity for many years.

In 1895 Pearson was elected to the US Congress. There, he developed a friendship with Theodore Roosevelt and, subsequent to the latter's election to the presidency in 1901, Pearson was persuaded to re-enter the diplomatic service, thereafter representing the USA in Genoa, Italy, Persia, Greece and Montenegro. After Roosevelt left the White House, Pearson retired from public office and returned to live at Richmond Hill. His 71-year life ended at Richmond Hill in 1923. Gabrielle died just a year later, and for nearly the next 50 years Richmond Hill was under the benign control of the couple's two surviving children – Thomas, who died in 1963, and Marjorie, who died in 1972. Neither had any children.

The next decade or so was a time of turbulence. In 1974, the mansion's furnishings and other treasures were sold at a highly celebrated weeklong public auction and, in the same year, the home itself was sold to the North Carolina Baptist Homes Corporation. In 1981, that corporation offered to sell Richmond Hill to the Preservation Society of Asheville and Buncombe County for just $1, with the proviso that the mansion be moved off the property within one year to make way for

a newly constructed assisted-living facility. That same year, the Preservation Society bought 7½ acres of adjoining land and, over the next three years, through house tours, benefit receptions, a T-shirt sale and donations, raised the $100,000 necessary to move the mansion to its new location, some 600 feet to the east. The Preservation Society then set out to find a suitable buyer for its beloved Richmond Hill.

Finally, in 1987, Richmond Hill was purchased by Dr. Albert Jake and Marge Michel of Greensboro, NC, who added 40 adjoining acres and then undertook a 33-month, $3 million restoration. On September 22, 1989, friends and guests of Richmond Hill celebrated the mansion's opening as an inn with an emotional "throwing away the key" ceremony, by which the present owners declared that Richmond Hill's doors would never again be closed to the public. The Michels have created here a particularly elegant inn with a romantic and serene atmosphere. Furthermore, their stated commitment to its ongoing improvement and expansion is shown by its growth from 12 to 36 rooms, construction of the Croquet Cottages and The Garden Pavilion, the addition of nationally recognized Gabrielle's Restaurant, and development of eight acres of lush Victorian landscape with an impressively attractive waterfall and mountain brook, adjacent to 40 wooded acres with gentle walking trails. These attributes have earned for Richmond Hill the AAA Four-Diamond Award both for accommodations and for fine dining.

Today's guests have several choices of accommodations. There are 12 guest rooms in the Mansion itself, decorated in a style reflecting the spirit of the 1890s – including canopy beds, Oriental rugs, claw-foot tubs and down pillows, but each offering also the modern comforts of a private bath and television. Of these, the most exquisite is the Chief Justice Suite, with a unique seven-sided bedroom, canopy bed, sitting room, wet bar, jetted tub, and fireplace. Five Croquet Cottages, so called because they are situated around the neatly manicured croquet courtyard, contain nine additional units, each named for

native North Carolina shrubs and trees. These are decorated in Victorian country style and each features gas fireplace, pencil-post bed, a spacious bathroom with separate shower and tub, and a front porch with rocking chairs. Among these, the Seven Oaks is a cottage suite with separate bedroom and sitting room and two cozy fireplaces.

The latest addition is the Garden Pavilion, designed in a U-shaped configuration overlooking the lovely Parterre Garden and waterfall and completed in 1996. It contains 15 spacious and modern guest rooms appointed in the grand tradition of the Victorian era – each with a refrigerator, most with a fireplace, and some with garden terrace and two-person jetted tub. Of these, the luxurious Thomas Pearson Suite has a private balcony overlooking the garden, king-sized bed, two-person jetted tub and a well-appointed sitting room. Also located within the Garden Pavilion are the Arbor Grille and Butterfield's Gift Shoppe.

Rates here are not uncomplicated, varying according to the type of room and whether you stay from Sunday through Thursday or over Friday and Saturday nights. For simplicity's sake and because this is a romantic weekend guide, we will presume the latter. Gold Rooms, located in the Mansion, cost $195; Platinum Rooms, in the Cottages, Mansion and Pavilion, cost $285; Diamond Rooms, in the Cottages, Mansion and Pavilion, are $345; King Estate Rooms, found in The Mansion and Pavilion, cost $395; and Luxury Suites, in The Mansion and Pavilion, run $450. All rates quoted are based on double-occupancy. Friday/Saturday rates also apply to holidays and the month of October, and a two-night minimum stay is required on weekends and holidays. Rates include afternoon tea with fresh pastries served in The Mansion; a full breakfast served by the gardens; complimentary soft drinks in the refrigerator; and nightly turndown service. Also included is enjoyment of the majestic Oak Hall, the impressive library, the elegant parlor

and the expansive, ever-blooming, and eminently peaceful gardens.

Don't forget to book a meal in the gourmet **Gabrielle's Restaurant**, where you may dine in stately Victorian splendor in the dining room or, less formally, on the glass-enclosed porch. Reservations are definitely a good idea and dress is formal, with a jacket and tie recommended. The fixed-price menu featuring six courses costs $65 per person on Fridays, Saturdays and during the month of October. American and nouvelle cuisine, with an emphasis on fresh foods available locally, is featured and the extensive wine list features over 200 vintages. The current menu is available on the website. Alternatively, try the **Arbor Grill** where, overlooking the mansion and the Parterre Garden, you may dine on Southern cuisine prepared with a modern flair in a casual ambiance.

From time to time ghosts have been reported to make their presence known at Richmond Hill. The Zany Ghost of Richmond Hill, a booklet written by Christopher Leonard and illustrated by Donna Teal, is available at the inn and makes for interesting reading. Or if you want to chronicle your own impressions of the Inn, you can record them in another colorfully illustrated booklet, Our Journal Of Memories, provided to each guest as a keepsake. Also, the staff will be happy to arrange, upon request, any number of special amenities: flowers, champagne or a personalized cake, to name a few.

We believe its management has best summed up the alluring qualities of the Richmond Hill Inn. This is a place where "the present is suspended for a moment by a place that remembers the past.... no matter where you find yourself on the estate, you will delight in the themes of elegance and comfort that define the Richmond Hill Inn, where romance is encouraged every moment." What more could romantics ask for?

The **Beaufort House**, a Victorian Bed & Breakfast Inn, offers elegant accommodations in a circa 1894 mansion at 61 North Liberty Street, Asheville, NC 28801. Reservations may be made by calling ☎ 800-261-2221 or through the website at www.beauforthouse.com. Originally named Beaufort Lodge, this fabulously grand Queen Anne-style home was commissioned by prominent North Carolina attorney and politician Theodore Fulton Davidson and his second wife, Sarah Lindsey Carter of Beaufort County. The 29-year-old Miss Sallie, as she was known, caught the eye of the 48-year-old Davidson following the death of his wife of 20 years. Their marriage united one of the great plantation families of the North Carolina Tidewater region and one of the most renowned mountain clans of Western North Carolina. The home they built arose in and rode the tide of Asheville's cultural and social awakening that was spearheaded by the Vanderbilt's entourage at nearby Biltmore. Although the couple had no children, Beaufort Lodge remained "in the family," following their deaths, passing through the hands of a succession of ever-more-distant relatives between 1934 and 1947, when it was sold for use as a school. One such relative, in an effort to retain ownership of the home, took in renters, among whom were actor Charlton Heston and his wife Lydia. They lived there for six months in 1947 while he served as Director of the Asheville Community Theatre. By 1973, the grand old Davidson residence had taken its place on the casualty list of time and neglect.

Thankfully, in the late 1970s, Dr. and Mrs. Lon McAnally purchased the home despite its condemned status. With the addition of a lot behind, they expanded the property to just shy of two acres. For the McAnallys, the restoration of Beaufort Lodge was a labor of love, and it is a testimony to their persistence that the house was reclaimed for posterity. Once again, the expansive covered porches welcome passersby, and the exquisite interiors reverberate with convivial conversation, evoking memories of the countless social events for which the home was designed. Through the efforts of the subsequent owners, the Hopkins, Beaufort Lodge gained a place on the National Register of Historic Places. The name was changed to

Beaufort House in 1993 when it was converted into the inn you see today. Since that time it has been featured in *National Geographic Traveler* magazine, used as a backdrop for numerous advertising/photo shoots, and named by a local publication as the #1 bed & breakfast in Western North Carolina.

Located in a quiet, upscale, historical neighborhood and set back off the road within beautifully landscaped gardens, this is an ideal spot for a romantic getaway. Eleven guest rooms each have private bath with hairdryer, as well as down pillows and comforters, cable TV, VCR, and telephone. Rates range between $95 and $235, depending upon room and amenities. These include as complimentary a lavish gourmet breakfast served in the antique dining room with linen-draped tables set with silver service, coffee, tea, hot chocolate, and fruit available round the clock and, in the afternoon, tea with fresh baked goods or a light snack of wine and cheeses. Your hosts, Robert and Jacqueline Glasgow and Jody Elliott, will also, upon request and for an appropriate fee, deliver to your room chilled champagne, a sumptuous platter of gourmet cheeses, crackers, sliced fresh fruits, gourmet chocolates and confections, and a fresh floral arrangement. With advance notice, Jacqueline will custom-design a platter or basket to your specifications.

The rooms themselves are elegantly appointed. There are six rooms in the Main House. The Arbor Room has Victorian furnishings, private entrance by way of a large private deck overlooking the gardens, a queen-sized four-poster bed, wood-burning fireplace, two-person Jacuzzi lounging tub and shower. The Garden Room is large, brightly decorated in hues of mint green and peach, has a queen-sized antique oak bed, a carved oak fireplace, private balcony overlooking the gardens, and full bath with oversize claw-foot tub, shower and marble washstand. The Rose Room is large, furnished in ornate Victorian mahogany antiques, has an exquisitely carved fireplace, an antique claw-foot tub and shower in the bath, and boasts glorious mountain views through elegantly curved glass windows. The H.A. Haseltine Room is small and cozy, with antique brass bed, a cheery atmosphere and, in the bath, a unique antique carved oak and marble sink original to the house. The

Theodore Davidson Room combines antiquities with modern amenities, has a queen-sized four-poster bed, ornate wood-burning fireplace, and a two-person jetted tub with a view over the mountains. The Sarah Davidson Suite, also known as the bridal suite, occupies the entire upper floor of the Main House. It features an oversized bedroom with king-sized canopy bed, a sitting area with an extraordinary architectural fan window, and, in the huge private bath, a tiled shower, two-person jetted tub and tiny adjacent reading area.

Located in a detached building, the Terrace Rooms each have a private entrance through a private garden terrace set with bistro tables and chairs and oversized private bath with two-person Jacuzzi lounging tub and shower. The Ivy Terrace Room, diminutive but very popular, has a queen-sized antique Victorian bed and a rose theme highlighted by a unique stained-glass flowering rose window. The Oak Terrace Room has a king-sized verdigris wrought iron bed.

Carriage House Rooms, located, as you may have surmised, in the restored carriage house, feature a more contemporary décor, private entrance, private deck with rocking chairs overlooking the woods, and private bath with two-person Jacuzzi tub and shower.

Bright and cheerful, The Dogwood Cottage has a queen-sized bed with netting canopy and whitewashed pine furniture. The Willow Cottage, spacious, comfortable and decorated in taupe and black with a Romanesque theme, has a queen-sized canopy oak and wrought iron bed. The very spacious Savannah Cottage has a queen-sized canopy bed and a wood-burning fireplace.

The **Cumberland Falls Bed and Breakfast Inn**, ☎ 828-253-4085, 888-743-2557, fax 253-5566 or www.cumberlandfalls.com, 254 Cumberland Avenue, is one of the newest and one of the most eclectic inns in town. It is in a delightful late-Victorian house, in the attractive Historic Montford District, just six blocks from downtown Asheville and only three miles from Biltmore. The first clue to what lies beyond begins with a stroll up the flower- and evergreen-lined walkway to the inn, past a series of delicately crafted waterfalls and ponds filled with koi

coyly playing hide and seek in the lilies. It's a scene of quiet serenity and peace, best enjoyed from the covered porch. The inn's interior will not disappoint either. The ambiance is casual, yet elegant. Everywhere you look throughout the public rooms – the inviting foyer with its original quilted maple woodwork, the living room with its bay windows and the bright solarium – there is a clever mix of styles, ranging from Victorian to ultra modern. Traditional tapestry-covered chairs and oriental rugs easily share the space with a more modern camel leather sofa, for example, and an aquarium is embedded above what used to be a fireplace. This refreshingly innovative décor continues throughout the six bright and airy guest rooms, with each having a character all its own. The colorful and cozy Garden Vista Room has a Jacuzzi tub, wrought iron bed, cast iron firestove and garden/waterfall view. The lavishly appointed Victorian Parlor Room – left virtually intact from the Victorian era – features a century-old Victorian bed and wood-burning fireplace, but with the addition of a 20th-century wall-to-wall marble Jacuzzi. All, though, offer such modern touches as TV/VCR/CD players (with a selection of 70 CDs or movies to choose from), massage shower heads and down pillows and comforters.

Rates, which range from $105 to $210 a night, include a truly gourmet breakfast served bedside, evening turndown service with chocolates, the use of snuggly robes, hairdryer, in-room telephone, and the cheerful assistance of staff in planning activities.

Your health is also important at the Cumberland Falls Bed and Breakfast Inn: expect to find purification systems for water and central air, a non-smoking environment, fresh natural foods used in the cooking, and the services of a massage therapist upon request.

When calling, inquire about possible discounts and packages currently on offer, including the Biltmore Package.

For those who prefer staying in the heart of downtown, a good choice is the **Radisson Hotel Asheville**, ☎ 828-252-8211 or fax 254-1374, One Thomas Wolfe Plaza. Each of the 281 well-appointed guest rooms and suites are furnished to the exacting Radisson standardst. Oher facilities include Izzie's Sports Bar and Grill on the lobby level and the 12th-floor Top of the Plaza Restaurant with spectacular views of the nearby mountains. Their Romance Package is particularly enticing. It includes an upper floor room with a king-sized bed, champagne, two souvenir glasses, a goodie basket upon arrival, and a full breakfast, either by way of room service or in the Top of the Plaza Restaurant. The very reasonable price for this package, from April to December, on Friday and Saturday nights, is $159 plus taxes for the first night, with extra nights billed at $99 each. At other times of the year, these rates decrease to $129 for the first night and $70 for extra nights.

Tables for Two

23 Page and **The New French Bar**, ☎ 828-252-3685, One Battery Park, is found in the basement of the Haywood Park Hotel, even though its name actually derives from an earlier address at 23 Page Street. Notwithstanding its rather unprepossessing entrance, this restaurant has one of the most eclectic and interesting menus we have seen anywhere. The chef specializes in New American cuisine and the dishes, which change by the season, are creatively prepared and beautifully presented. When we visited you could choose from appetizers such as carpaccio duo, pan-seared loin of lamb paired with smoked salmon over Tuscan beans ($8.95); vegetable beggar's purse over wilted spinach, fresh summer vegetables sautéed with morel mushrooms nestled in a crispy phyllo purse ($5.95); or fresh house made seafood sausage set in roasted papaya and lobster broth ($6.25). We were equally impressed with the entrée selections, which included wild game mixed grill with Carolina pheasant and antelope served with raspberry demiglace and herb pearled barley ($26.95); lobster crusted trout, locally farmed mountain trout crusted with cold water

lobster, sauced with lemon caviar beurre blanc served over spinach-tomato risotto; or grilled, marinated jumbo prawns served over squid ink pasta with sun dried tomato-basil pesto ($26.95). As would be expected, the wine list is extensive – and it must be to be to keep pace with the cuisine. 23 Page serves dinner, nightly, from 5:30 pm and The New French Bar is open for lunch from 11 am to 2 pm, with a menu that changes daily.

The Market Place, ☎ 828-252-4162, fax 253-3120 and www.marketplace-restaurant.com, 20 Wall Street, celebrated its 20th anniversary in 1999 under the guiding hands of chef-proprietors Mark and Kim Rosenstein. To mark this occasion, Kim collaborated with Bernard Delille, the Master Winemaker of the Biltmore Estate, to create a special Market Place Cuvée, using the traditional Méthode Champenoise technique. Our recommendation is to start your evening with a glass of this special vintage, while reading the full story on the front of the menu.

Take a few moments to savor the unusual décor. Although this two-level building has worn numerous hats, it lends itself quite naturally to use as a restaurant. The upper level allows views over the lower, and the resulting atrium is host to large metal fish mobiles that will grab your attention. We like the culinary style, too. Unusual appetizers may include an international cheese board ($5.95); The Market Place smoked seafood ($9.25) and duck & spinach phyllo turnover with olive and fines herbes sauce ($7.50). Of the entrées we suggest you consider tamarind glazed salmon with sesame spinach (full portion $23.95 and light portion $15.95); and grilled lamb chop, with tomato and tarragon butter fennel and pecan couscous (four chops $28.95; two chops $18.95). The desserts are equally tempting, as are the signature coffee drinks and range of cordials and cognacs. Innovatively, wines can be purchased either by the glass, by the bottle or by the half-glass, in samplers of three whites, three reds, two whites and a red or two reds and a white. The Market Place is open for dinner from Monday to Saturday (Sunday as well in October) from 6 pm to 9:30 pm; the Winebar is open from 5:30 pm until late. Dinner reservations are definitely suggested.

The façade of 10 North Market Street, just a couple of blocks away from the Radisson, may not be the most impressive, but you know what they say about a book and its cover. This is home to **Vicenzo's Ristorante**, ☎ 828-254-4698 or fax 254-4697, Italian by name and by character, but with an intriguing split personality. The lower level is comprised of a large open and well-stocked bar and a handful of tables where the dining is casual. Upstairs, though, is a cozy, intimate and charming restaurant where you can enjoy a wide selection of exquisitely prepared, and very reasonably priced, Italian dishes. Expect such antipasti as formaggi al forno, fresh mozzarella, Parmesan and Romano cheeses baked in puff pastry and accompanied with a zesty pomodoro sauce ($6.95); and Cozze Luciano, Prince Edward Island black mussels steamed in garlic, lemon and white wine, finished with cream ($7.95). There are numerous pasta dishes, many with half-dishes available, and a selection of vegetarian main dishes. Other attractive main courses are scallopini parmesan, sautéed veal scallop topped with a blend of mozzarella, parmesan and romano cheeses served with a traditional pomodoro sauce ($22); and scallope e gamberi en panna pesto, shrimp and scallops sautéed in champagne and finished with pesto cream sauce ($16.95). All dishes, helpfully, come with wine recommendations. Vicenzo's Ristoranto, with smoking and non-smoking sections, is open for dinner Monday through Thursday from 5:30 pm to 10 pm, Friday and Saturday from 5:30 pm to 11 pm and Sunday from 5:30 pm to 9 pm, with reservations suggested.

A little farther away, slap bang in the center of Asheville, you'll find the **Bistro 1896**, ☎ 828-251-1300, at 7 Pack Square. This light and airy restaurant, with a small outside terrace, is decorated, as are its menus, with old black and white photographs of the city. The restaurant's logo, a fish swimming through a capital letter B, clearly forecasts what to expect here. Fish and seafood dishes, in innovative combinations, dominate both lunch and dinner menus that are served Monday through Saturday from 11:30 to 4 pm and from 5 to 10 pm, respectively. Look also for an interesting selection of bottled beers.

The **Jack of the Wood**, ☎ 828-252-5445, 95 Patton Avenue, just past Pritchard Park and Haywood Street, is downtown Asheville's own brewpub. The usual array of pub grub, with some interesting additions like smoked salmon focaccia ($6.50); roasted red pepper hummus ($4.95) and mushroom barley burger ($5.50), can be washed down with olde-world-style ales like Gold Cream Ale, Red Ale, Porter and Extra Special Bitter. Half-gallon Green Man Growlers are available for you to take home your favorite brew. Jack of the Wood is open daily, and features live music – with Celtic, bluegrass or traditional Appalachian groups, Wednesday through Saturday.

The **Laughing Seed Café**, ☎ 828-252-3445, 40 Wall Street, with both indoor and outdoor seating, serves vegetarian cuisine. In 1997 it was voted, by readers of *Vegetarian Times*, one of the 66 best vegetarian restaurants in the United States and Canada. The all-natural and mostly organic gourmet menu features Indian, Asian and other international specialties. The water served here is filtered; items contain no animal-derived products; and soy mozzarella may be substituted for dairy cheese in most menu items. Given that the Laughing Seed gives such personalized attention, some dishes can take a little longer to prepare. The Juice Bar offers some amazing concoctions to which, for an extra 50¢, you can add a dash of coconut milk, soy protein powder, yogurt or spirulina. Appetizers include: mondo max veggie nachos ($5.50, sour cream $1.50 extra and jalapeños 50¢ extra); vegetable hand roll ($5.50) and hummus bi tahini (single $3.75 or double $5.25). Salads are plentiful, both in scope and quantity, as are sandwiches and pizzas. Interesting entrées are: ratatouille and polenta, a classic Southern European dish of eggplant, zucchini, yellow squash, ripe tomatoes and sweet onions combined with grilled polenta and served with a salad ($7.95) and Harmony Bowl, a wonderful meal in one bowl with layers of brown rice, beans, steamed vegetables, grilled tofu and sesame ginger sauce ($5.95). To any entrée, you may add the sea vegetable of the day for $1.75 and steamed vegetables and rice with choice of sauce for $6.95 large and $3.95 small. The Laughing Seed Café is open for lunch and dinner Monday, Wednesday and Thursday

from 11:30 am to 9 pm, on Friday and Saturday from 11:30 to 10 pm, and on Sunday from 10 am to 9 pm. Sunday brunch is served from 10 to 2 pm.

Shops, Spas, etc.

Wherever you decide to stay, remember your loved one won't fail to be enchanted by some especially thoughtful and loving touch. A dozen red roses awaiting in the room is sure to get your romantic break off to a great start. Call ahead to the **Flower Gallery**, ☎ 828-258-8427, in the Haywood Park Hotel & Promenade, to arrange it.

Our Suggestion: Add to the arrangement one of their hand blown glass hearts, a wonderful memory of a wonderful weekend, at just $16.95 more.

Just a few doors away at 36 Haywood Street is another store that shouldn't be overlooked. **The Chocolate Fetish**, ☎ 828-258-2353, could be described as one of a kind. This small and easy-to-miss store has been described by the *Los Angeles Times* (May 30, 1991) as "selling America's best truffles." These delectable confections are made from pure chocolate and whipping-cream, and, as with everything else on a romantic weekend, are best savored and not rushed.

Talking of treats, pay attention to this one. Not very far away at all in the Haywood Park Hotel Atrium, you will find **Alyce's Treasure Trove**, ☎ 828-281-3224. Alyce, the proprietress, has gone to great lengths to gather all kinds of interesting jewelry, clothing, and other odds and ends. Couples on a romantic weekend will, however, likely find her selection of lingerie by Claire Pettibone of most interest. These delightfully delicate and innovative creations are, without exception, beautiful, and certain to enhance any lady's wardrobe.

We found that interesting wine stores are not all that common in this area, but the **Weinhaus**, ☎ 828-254-6453 or 800-283-1544, at 86 Patton Avenue, in the heart of downtown Asheville,

is an exception. In fact, the selection here is impressively wide and, in addition to a nice range of champagnes, you'll come across wines and beers seen infrequently, even in much larger cities.

Most guys who even marginally understand women will know that a bit of pampering goes a long way toward putting a lady in a romantic mood. And, what woman wouldn't feel pampered by a full spa treatment – with haircut and style, manicure, facial, body waxing, body wrap, and massage. Unfortunately, not many get the chance to experience such luxury. So, gentlemen, if you want to become her hero, contact **Beverly Hills Styling & Day Spa**, ☎ 828-298-6371, 1078 Tunnel Road. They offer a wide array of treatments that include massages, spa facials, body wraps with exfoliation, special manicures, steam therapy, scalp massage and body waxing. Their special packages, all named after famous movie stars, are the best value. For the ladies these include the Ginger Rogers, $155, which takes two hours and includes a half-hour massage, facial and exfoliation; and the Grace Kelly, $220, which takes three hours and adds a manicure, pedicure and a snack/beverage to the services offered in the Ginger Rogers package.

> *Norman's Suggestion: Say "I love you" loud and clear with The Sophia Loren package. This five-hour treat costs $295 and includes an aromatherapy massage, body wrap, facial, spa manicure, steam, spa pedicure, plus lunch and a beverage. And, if you really want to do this in style, make arrangements with the spa for a limousine to transport your lady to and from Beverly Hills. Is there a woman in the world that won't find you irresistible after a few hours of that kind of indulgence?*

On a practical note, arranging a spa package could work to a fellow's advantage in other ways. Make good use of the time alone to pop down to nearby Lake Lure (see page 110) for a spot of fishing! If you fancy a little pampering yourselves, however,

The Cary Grant and The John Wayne packages, at $175 and $95, have been especially designed with you in mind.

Bald Head Island

Have you been saving your pennies for a romantic tropical vacation – in the Bahamas or Hawaii perhaps? Well, paradise is closer than you might imagine. Just two nautical miles off the southeastern tip of North Carolina, and 25 miles south of Wilmington at the mouth of the Cape Fear River is a semi-tropical island, with miles of pristine beaches and a wealth of exceptional animal and plant life just begging to be explored.

History

Not just a pretty island, its strategic location has endowed Bald Head Island with an interesting history as well. In fact, the abundance of shellfish and fish found in the waters and marshes surrounding the island attracted Native Americans here as early as 300 AD. Many centuries later English settlers discovered these natural resources, establishing colonies upstream on the Cape Fear River and on the coast to the southwest. The growth of trading and shipping logically followed, as did the scourge of the day, pirates, who weren't long in discovering that Bald Head Island made for a perfect base. The most famous of these, Blackbeard (see page 226 under *The Crystal Coast*) certainly stopped here on several occasions.

A frequent visitor to the area was a retired British officer from Barbados, Major Stede Bonner. His trademark trick, as the area's chief pirate, was to position lights along the beaches, thereby luring ships into his trap. It was reported that, in July and August of 1718 alone, he captured 13 ships in that fashion! Ironically, later that year he ran aground off the island and was captured himself.

In the years leading up to the Revolution, the Cape Fear area, as has been more fully detailed in the *Wilmington and Wrightsville Beach* chapter, was a major supplier of naval stores for the British fleet. So vital were these supplies that during the Revolutionary War the British stationed 5,000 troops on Bald Head Island, first under the command of General Sir Henry Creighton and then under General Charles Cornwallis, to protect their interests. Later, during the Civil War, Confederate forces built Fort Holmes along the western edge of the island, with the aim of preventing Union forces from gaining access to, or taking possession of, the Cape Fear River.

The treacherous waters of Cape Fear, and the Frying Pan Shoals – an area of sandbars extending 20 miles into the Atlantic Ocean from the Cape, have profoundly influenced the evolution of this island's character. In early days, river pilots who lived on the island would stand watch atop the dunes on the south beach. Upon sighting a vessel, they would row out to guide them safely across the sandbars and up the river.

> *Eventually, the piloting traffic wore the dune free of grass, and to approaching vessels it resembled a bald head. Thus the name, Bald Head Island – at least, so the story goes.*

Later, lighthouses replaced the pilots as the main navigational aids. Three were built on the island: Bald Head Light in 1796, Old Baldy in 1817, and the Cape Fear Light in 1903. In 1882 a lifesaving station was constructed, and by the end of that decade, the population, including lifesaving servicemen, fishermen, river pilots, and lighthouse keepers and their families, had swollen to 150.

This intriguing past is recalled for visitors today by way of several carefully restored structures, including lightkeepers' cottages, a lifesaving station and the famous lighthouse, Old Baldy.

In 1983 the very prescient George P. Mitchell family, through their Bald Head Island Limited company, purchased the island. They have overseen its development into a tasteful and

ecologically aware resort, keeping careful control of all aspects of life on the island and of transportation to, from and around Bald Head Island.

Cars are not allowed on the island, leaving the roads traffic-free and the air as pristine as the beaches. In fact, you couldn't drive there if you wanted to. There is no bridge. The only way in is by ferry, operated by Bald Head Island Transportation, Inc., from the **Bald Head Island Ferry Landing** at **Indigo Plantation and Marina**, off West 9th Street in Southport, NC. Make sure to arrive early, driving directly to the baggage area to allow the outfitters plenty of time to get your luggage onto the ferry dollies. Then drive your car back to the gated and secure parking lot, where you will be assessed a daily parking charge. The price of the voyage is $15 per person (round-trip), and the 20-minute voyage to the island is most enjoyable. If you are in luck, statuesque pelicans, sitting on wooden poles jutting from the water will form an honor guard for your arrival.

Our Suggestion: Pack as though you will be traveling by plane. In other words, everything should be secured in suitcases, not left loose. Another reminder, and a much more important one, is that you need to make an advance reservation for the ferry, and confirm it three days ahead by calling ☎910-457-5003. This not only ensures your place in heavy traffic (especially critical in the high season), it also guarantees you seats on the tram from the harbor to your B&B.

Things to Do

Bald Head Island is just 2,000 acres, although another 10,000 acres of protected salt marsh creeks and maritime forest have been deeded to the State of North Carolina. There are, however, a surprising number of activities available to guests here, with most of them, naturally, centered around the water.

We have learned that sometimes the simplest plans are best, and a romantic weekend at Bald Head Island certainly lends itself to enjoyment of the simple pleasures. Here the hustle and pressures of day-to-day living will seem a distant memory as you explore the 14 miles of pristine beaches.

You can expect to come face-to-face with the wide variety of animals, fowl and fauna that call Bald Head Island home. Who could fail to be charmed by the cavortings of the omnipresent brown pelicans, a species so recently near extinction? Loggerhead sea turtles, too, are common, no doubt because of their prolific reproductive habits.

Typically, a female will lay over 100 eggs in the dunes each season. Amazingly, the temperature of the sand determines the sex of the hatchlings – warmer sand produces more males and cooler sand produces more females.

If you can break yourselves away from more romantic occupations, take a midnight Turtle Walk. These, and the Alligator and Bird Walks each morning, are conducted by **Bald Head Island Conservancy**, ☎ 910-457-0089. Blue crabs, so-called because of their brightly colored claws, inhabit the creeks. Take a little more care, though, around the freshwater lagoons, where you might spot an American alligator. Back on land you might come across a gray fox, but are unlikely to meet the plentiful, but mainly nocturnal, white-tailed deer. Finally, in the warmer months, there is the fascinating white ibis, a very impressive wading bird that flies to the island to feed on fiddler crabs in the marshlands.

A good way to acquaint your selves with the flora is a gentle walk along the **Kent Mitchell Nature Trail**. Begin at the marker on the Federal Road, just past its intersection with Muscadine Road, and allow approximately 20 minutes to maneuver through maritime forest, salt marsh and tidal creek. You will find that many of the plant species are identified along the way.

Of course, a bit of fishing is always a tempting thought. And, you can succumb to temptation even if you neglected to bring your equipment with you. Either the **Island Chandler**, ☎ 910-457-7450, or **Island Passage**, ☎ 910-457-4944, can supply fishing gear, crab nets or clam rakes.

Or maybe you dream of having bigger fish to fry. In that case, call Captain Paul Thompson of **Impulsive Charters**, ☎ 910-457-5331, pager 457-TUNA, fax 699-1234 or www.charternet.com/fishersi/mpulsive. He's at Marina Row, Slip A-11, Bald Head Island. Paul operates a 38-foot Bertram with twin 375 horsepower turbo-charged Caterpillar diesel engines. It's equipped with the best in electronic equipment and outfitted with Penn International or Tiagra rods and reels. Choose either a half-day at $475, or a full day at $900 and go in search of giant king mackerel, wahoo, cobia, dolphin, tuna or bluefish. And, along way, you may cross paths with some ferocious looking sharks. The really adventurous will want to make the 45- to 60-mile trip out into the Gulf Stream itself, a privilege that will cost you $1,100 for a full day. OK, so it's a tad expensive. But just think of the adventure and excitement, and if you get lucky out there you can live off the stories and the photographs for a lifetime. Captain Paul also offers trips on a 17-foot Scout flat boat for backwater fishing that may appeal to those prone to seasickness. Give him a call for more details.

Of course, fishing isn't all that's happening on the water. Maybe you want to be in charge of your own craft. If so, contact the **Marina Dockmaster**, ☎ 910-457-7380, or **Island Passage**, ☎ 910-457-4944, and arrange to rent a vessel. If you fancy a canoe, **Island Wheels**, ☎ 910-457-4944, rents 17-foot ones suitable for a creek safari, with basic instruction being provided.

On the other hand, leave the navigation to the professionals at **Winds of Carolina Sailing Charters**, ☎ 910-278-7249 or 612-0222, while you unwind with the winds. Between March 15th and December 1st a number of daily outings are offered aboard their 37-foot sailing boat, the *Stephanie*. The Morning Tour Sail departs at 9:30 am, takes you to local points of interest and includes a narration on Oak Island history. The After-

noon Sail, leaves at 1 pm and, weather permitting, allows time for a swim when it lays anchor off Caswell Beach. Each of these lasts approximately three hours and costs $38 per person, including complimentary beverages. The Sunset/Dolphin Watch Sail, sets sail at 5:30 pm. If your timing is right you can enjoy a Full Moon Cruise, available for the five nights before and five nights after a full moon. These romantic escapades include a cheese and fruit tray, hors d'oeuvres, and complimentary beer, wine and soft drinks. They cost $41 per person.

While all of these cruises leave from *Stephanie's* home slip at Dock B, Southport Marina, romantic weekenders based on Bald Head Island may request, when making reservations, a pick up at the Island Marina. This will cost an extra $10 per person, but saves both travel and hassle.

Guests on Bald Head Island are deemed temporary members of the resort for purposes of tennis, croquet, golf and swimming. While entry to the pool is free, you are responsible for payment of greens or court fees.

The highlight of a stay on Bald Head Island will certainly be a visit to **Old Baldy Lighthouse** itself. It is open for self-guided tours daily from dawn to dusk, and the observation tower at the top has splendid views over the island.

Sweet Dreams

Bald Head Island Management, Inc., manages real estate development and sales, as well as resort and island operations, and offers a wealth of attractive properties for rent, either by the day or the week. If you are in the market for space (multi-bedroom) and privacy, and if money isn't a major consideration, ☎ 800-234-1666 for information or 800-432-RENT for reservations. The company also owns the **Marsh Harbor Inn**, which offers a couple of interesting packages for weekend visitors.

For romantics, though, we recommend the privately owned **Theodosia's – A Bed & Breakfast**, ☎ 910-457-6563, 800-656-1812, fax 457-6055 and www.theodosias.com. It's at Harbor Village, on the opposite side of the harbor from the dock. The

delightful architectural design, with its numerous porches and balconies, fits perfectly in this maritime environment. Inside there are 10 lovely rooms, most named after some variety of local fauna. Each has private bath/shower, cable TV and telephone, and boasts views from either a private porch or balcony out over the harbor, the river or the island marches.

Of the rooms, two have a particularly romantic ambiance. First choice would be the Honeymoon Suite, also known as the Coral Honeysuckle Suite, with private entrance, exquisite furnishings, Jacuzzi tub and harbor views. If that is taken, the Beauty Berry, a clematis-bordered room with an elegant Victorian king-sized bed, large soaking tub and water views, uniquely finished out in West Indian décor, plays an impressive second fiddle. Rates range from $165 to $225 during the High Season (March to October) and $150 to $205 during the Low Season (November to February).

Begin your day with the complimentary full breakfast. The menu includes exquisite egg dishes, pancakes of many varieties, and seasonal fruit, accompanied by delectable home-baked goods. Hosts Garrett and Donna Albertson also provide afternoon snacks, as well as an unending supply of fruit, cookies and candy.

Following in the family tradition, the Albertsons' son is an accomplished chef. For an additional $130, he will prepare a gourmet meal for two, which may be taken by the soft glow of candlelight on your private balcony. Advance reservation are necessary.

Other extras include free use of a golf cart and bicycles. Keep in mind, though, that the speed limit on the island is just 18 mph. Upon returning from the beach, you can wash off the sand in an outdoor shower before entering the house. Guests of the inn

also enjoy a full club membership, which allows free access to the pool, discounts on such activities as golf, tennis and croquet, and entrance to the elegant club dining room.

Bald Head Island is becoming increasingly popular as a location shoot for both movies and television programs, so you never know whom you may run into.

Tables for Two

Bald Head Island Management Inc. has incorporated in its plan a variety of eateries. The most prestigious is the **Bald Head Island Inn**, where patrons can enjoy cocktails and light snacks in the lounge, or a full meal in the dining room. In keeping with the resort atmosphere, dress shorts or dress jeans are acceptable here – but T-shirts, cutoffs and short shorts are not. The **River Pilot Cafe and Lounge** is more casual, although shoes and shirts are required. Lunch and dinner are served year-round, and a full breakfast can be enjoyed during the summer. The **Pelicatessen**, found near the pool and also known as the "Peli Deli", and **Eb & Flo's**, a harborside place, are open only seasonally. The latter, an open-air pavilion, features such delicacies as a Carolina steampot of shrimp, clams and spiced sausage. Finally, the **Island Chandler Deli** is integrated into a well-stocked grocery store, and has on offer all of the typical deli delights.

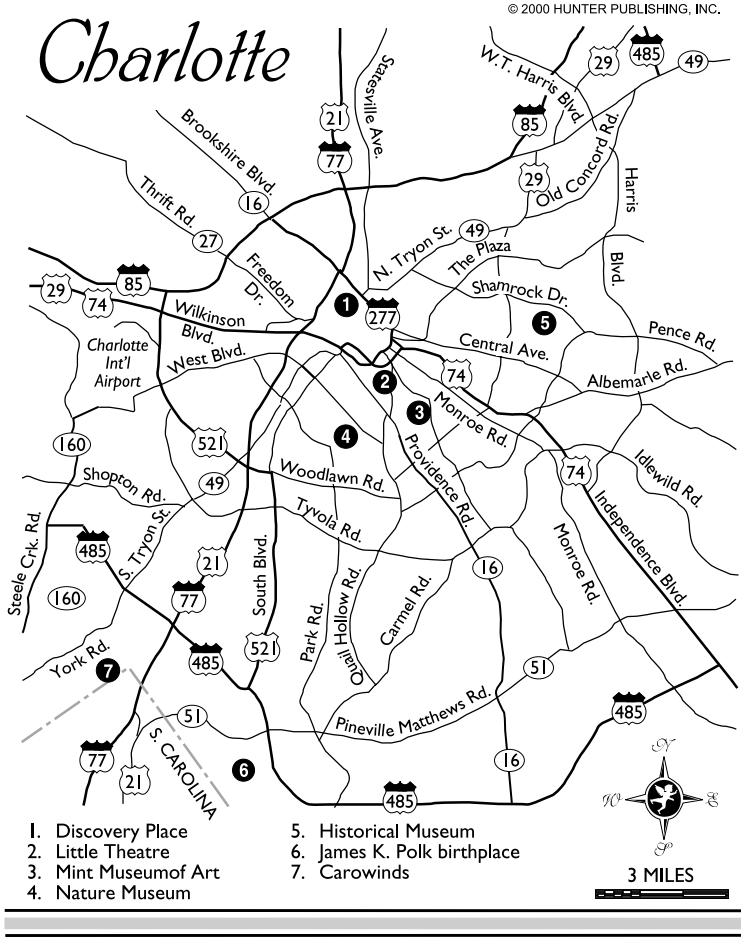
Charlotte

Charlotte, sitting proudly atop a hill and with a host of glistening skyscrapers, is visible from many miles away when approaching by road. As you get nearer, your attention will likely be drawn to the very prominent Bank of America Corporate Center – which, at 60 stories, is the tallest building in the Southeast. A crown-like sculpture adorns its apex, and this is symbolism indeed – Charlotte is nicknamed the "Queen City".

History

Some 250 years ago, during the 1740s, Scotch-Irish immigrants, led by Tom Polk and traveling the Great Wagon Road from Philadelphia, stopped at the crossroads of two Indian trading paths just east of the Catawba River and made a decision to build a settlement. The community grew rapidly. In 1762, the County of Mecklenburg was established and, just six years later, the City of Charlotte was incorporated. Being loyal to their homeland, they named their city in honor of Queen Charlotte, wife of King George III of England, and the surrounding county after her German birthplace, Mecklenburg-Strelitz. Incidentally, Sophia Charlotte was a mere 17 years of age when she married the most powerful man in the world, and she went on to bear him no fewer than 15 children.

Its location at a strategic crossroads was largely responsible for Charlotte's evolution into a hub for commerce. Following the 1799 discovery of a 17-lb. gold nugget, later sold by its owner for just $8.50, the city became the center for gold production in the United States. In 1836 two of Charlotte's native sons, Andrew Jackson and James K. Polk, were instrumental in having a US Branch Mint constructed on W. Trade Street. Although the gold production center passed to California with the Great Gold Rush of the late 1840s, the emergence of the railroads and their convergence at Charlotte brought a new age of prosperity. Cotton production flourished and, as late as the 1950s, hun-



dreds of local cotton farms fed the region's numerous mills. Such commercial success led to the opening of a Federal Reserve Branch here in 1927, and the banking industry began to flex its economic muscle.

Charlotte Today

Today Charlotte is the largest city in the Carolinas and is ranked 35th in the country. It is at the center of the largest con-

solidated rail system in the nation and is a major crossroads for the interstate highway system. It serves as headquarters for some of the nation's largest banks and, in fact, holds the distinction of being the country's second-largest banking center. With a city/county population of over 1.3 million, it is the nation's fastest growing metro region. Indeed, over 5.5 million people live within a 100-mile radius, and a staggering 50% of the US population lives within 650 miles of Charlotte.

This rapid growth, generally of an upwardly mobile professional class, has brought in its wake many luxuries. Top-class hotels and restaurants abound. Arts, culture and museums flourish. And Charlotte has become a major-league sports town.

Speaking of sports, one place in Charlotte just can't be overlooked. In the fall of 1993 the Carolinas were awarded a National Football League expansion team franchise. They opened their 1996 season in the magnificent 72,302-seat Ericsson Stadium, a towering, elegantly modern, black and silver edifice just a stone's throw from downtown Charlotte.

The NBA, though, preceded the NFL, and the Charlotte Hornets have been setting attendance records from their very first game in November 1988.

The Hornets got their name from an incident in the Revolutionary War, believe it or not. The only Revolutionary battle ever fought in Charlotte left Cornwallis defeated after a surprise attack. He labeled Charlotte a "hornets' nest of rebellion" – hence the nickname, Hornets.

Even given the success of professional ball teams, the sport most often associated with Charlotte is both the oldest established in the area and the fastest growing in the nation, NASCAR racing. The **Lowe's Motor Speedway**, originally designed and built in 1959 is, today, a 1.5-mile superspeedway that is a showpiece in itself. It is, in fact, the largest sports stadium in the Southeast. Accommodating over 135,000 fans, and with room for considerable expansion still, it hosts two

Winston Cup races, including the season's longest event, the Coca-Cola 600. If your visit doesn't coincide with one of these major affairs, check the schedule anyway. An array of events, including other races and non-automobile shows, are held at the Speedway throughout the year. The facility is also a popular backdrop for TV commercials and movies. Not surprisingly, the area is also home base for a number of NASCAR teams; 80% of them are located within 70 miles of the speedway.

Things to Do

Uptown

The first place to head for downtown, actually "Uptown" in Charlotte parlance, is **INFO Charlotte**, ☎ 704-331-2700 or 800-231-4636, at the corner of S. Tryon Street and 2nd Street. This is operated as a joint effort between the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, ☎ 704-378-1300, www.charlottechamber.org, and the Charlotte Convention & Visitors Bureau, ☎ 704-334-2282, 800-722-1994, fax 704-342-3972 and www.charlottecvb.org. Here, between the hours of 8:30 am to 5 pm, Monday to Friday, 10 am to 4 pm on Saturday and 1 pm to 4 pm on Sunday, you will find an abundance of information about both Charlotte and the surrounding region. In addition to the usual array of brochures and flyers, look for The Wonder Wall, with its three state-of-the-art CD-interactive informational kiosks, a photographic exhibition displaying the history of Charlotte, an interactive Uptown Charlotte model, and a variety of Charlotte and North Carolina souvenirs.

Other websites of offering information of interest to visitors are:

- **The Charlotte Observer**, www.charlotte.com
- **Charlotte's Web**, www.charweb.org
- **City of Charlotte/Mecklenburg County**, www.charmeck.nc.us
- **North Carolina Travel Guide**, www.visitnc.com
- **Charlotte Sports**, www.charlottesports.org

Exiting Info Charlotte, you may embark upon one of several self-guided walking tours or set out to explore on your own. You will most likely begin with a walk up **Tryon Street**. Tryon, the city's main north/south thoroughfare and the street that divides east from west in Charlotte, was named for William Tryon, the English royal governor of North Carolina under King George III between 1765-1771. It was during his tenure, in 1768, that the city was incorporated.

Three blocks up S. Tryon you will find **Independence Square**, located at the junction of Tryon and Trade Streets. This is truly the crossroads of Charlotte, both physically and historically. It marks the spot where the two original Indian trails met. It was here in 1775, a half-decade before the Revolutionary War Battle of Charlotte blazed briefly in 1780 and a full year before Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence, that the irate citizens of Charlotte signed the Mecklenburg Resolves and Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence from British rule. At this junction now stand a series of sculptures, one embellishing each corner. Each one commemorates an important chapter in the continuing history of Charlotte. A gold-miner symbolizes commerce; a female millworker symbolizes the textile heritage; an African-American railroad builder symbolizes the city's prominence as a transportation center and, finally, a mother holding her baby aloft symbolizes the city's hopes for the future. And the future is almost tangible from this perspective, in the futuristic architectural style of the skyscrapers all around you, exemplified by the dramatically sharp angles of the Omni Charlotte Hotel. We suggest that you sit on one of the benches around the square, soak in the surroundings, and take a moment to decide where to go next, unless you have determined to take the full tour. You have plenty of interesting choices.

Directly across E. Trade Street from the eye-catching Omni Charlotte, behind The Future statue, is a triple-building complex designed by world-famous architect Cesar Pelli. First, you will find the 60-story **Bank of America Corporate Center**, open between 7 am and 10 pm seven days a week. Even if you haven't any banking needs, it's worth a stop inside to admire

the three lobby frescoes, each a dramatic 18 by 23 feet, the work of artist Ben Long. Artists of a different genre are found in the second of the three buildings. The **North Carolina Blumenthal Performing Arts Center**, opened in November 1992, features the 2,100-seat Belk Theater and the more intimate Booth Playhouse with its seating capacity of 450. Home to Opera Carolina, North Carolina Dance, the Charlotte Symphony, the Charlotte Repertory Theater, the Charlotte Choral Society, and the Oratorio Singers, the Center offers a wide variety of outstanding artistic performances. Call ☎ 704-372-1000 for information and to obtain tickets. Last among this structural trio is **Founder's Hall**, which was named after town founder Thomas Polk, whose home once sat on the site. This is a magnificent indoor atrium plaza with retail shops, restaurants and indoor entertainment.

A stroll one block farther north along Tryon, past the Dunhill Hotel, brings you to **Discovery Place**, ☎ 704-372-6261 or 800-935-0553, the city's award-winning hands-on science museum. Here you can't fail to be fascinated by the three-story tropical rain forest with its mix of exotic plants, birds, small animals and even a 15-foot python (safely housed in a glass enclosure). You can view marine creatures in the aquarium and tidal pool, experience the **Life Center and Science Circus** and fly off into space in the **Challenger Learning Center**, featuring a mission control and space station. Not to be missed, either, is the *Charlotte Observer* **OMNIMAX Theater and Planetarium**. This boasts one of the largest film frames in cinematic history, one of the most advanced projectors ever built and a high fidelity, six-channel sound system. All together, these provide an all-encompassing sight, sound and motion experience for up to 300 entranced visitors. Among the attractions of the Space Voyageur Planetarium is Starball, which projects 10,000 stars onto one of the largest domes in the US Add to the mix 200 special effects projectors and you are assured an unparalleled galactic journey. Both the museum and the planetarium are open, from September to May, on Monday to Friday from 9 am to 5 pm, Saturday from 9 am to 6 pm and Sunday 1 to 6 pm.

During June, July and August, opening hours are Monday to Saturday from 9 am to 6 pm and Sunday from 1 to 6 pm.

A couple of blocks directly to the east, across N. Tryon, lie two more interesting experiences. **Spirit Square Center for Arts and Education**, ☎ 704-372-9664, at 345 N. College Street, widely recognized as one of the most comprehensive arts centers in the Southeast, combines under one roof all varieties of artistic expression – performing arts, visual arts and art education. The hours here are, however, somewhat limited, from noon to 6 pm, Tuesday through Saturday.

Seeing this vibrant and modern city, you might wonder how the progressive New South arose from the ashes of the Civil War. For some enlightenment, wander over to 324 N. College Street, and the exhibits of the **Museum of the New South**, ☎ 704-333-1887. In this, Charlotte's only regional history museum, you can view and touch artifacts and listen to stories of the Piedmont Carolinas from post-Reconstruction to the present.

> *For those who are, as we were, uninformed as to the meaning of Piedmont, it translates literally as "foot of the mountains," and encompasses the region between the eastern coastal plain and the western mountains of the Carolinas.*

By now, with legs tiring and mouths a little dry, minds will be turning to thoughts of refreshment and relaxation. Fortunately for you there is a place nearby that exactly fits the bill. In fact, we very recently discovered this establishment on our final swing through the area to update and verify the research we began here in 1997. Its opening on Saturday, November 21st, 1998, is evidence of just how forward-looking traditionally southern Charlotte has become, though, ironically enough, it is the brainchild of a company that has been serving Charlotte since 1928. Food emporiums have become popular here in the past few years – with perhaps the best-known of these being Eatzis, of Texas, Atlanta and more recently New York City fame – but this is not the kind of place one would naturally relate with Charlotte. **Reid's Fine Foods**, though, thought oth-

erwise. Their 7th Street Station store, ☎ 704-377-1312, fax 377-7686, www.reids.com, at 225 East 6th Street, is a marvelous example of this genre. It is also of interest for its historical and future connections. The 7th Street Station was once a stop on the electric trolley line that connected Uptown with the historic South End. During the upcoming years the trolley line will be extended back to Uptown and plans are that it will serve its original purpose once again. The store itself, with its huge open-plan design and exposed air-conditioning ducts, is a wonder to behold. Its contents are so multi-faceted, no visitor could leave empty-handed. Before exploring, though, have a seat and indulge in some refreshment. If you are in the mood for a snack then you have a difficult decision ahead of you; there is so much to choose from. Besides an enticing array of hot and cold foods, a comprehensive choice of sandwiches that may be made to order, and the obligatory salads and pizzas, there is a healthy collection of fresh vegetables and even a Hissho Sushi bar. If you've previously dined at the **McNinch House** then you will know the 7th Street Station is also a satellite showcase for Ellen Davis' homemade foods. Among these are such delicacies as vegetable soup, twice baked potatoes, quiches, key lime pies and turtle cakes, which you may enjoy here or take with you. If you haven't yet been to the McNinch House, then you can get a foretaste of what is to come. There is also a wide selection of cookies, cakes and breads.

If you just want to whet your whistle, then head directly for **Reid's Wine Bar** at 7th Street Station. Find yourselves a pair of unoccupied stools among those that line the three-sided bar, order a glass of wine or a bottle from the extensive beer list (maybe treat yourself to a smoke from the fine cigar list) and enjoy the hustle and bustle of the surrounding store. No doubt you will, as well, be making a mental list of what your purchases will be. First, you will want something especially delicious for a late-night romantic snack. Begin, then, in the premier wine department, where there is sure to be one bottle of fine vintage champagne that tempts your palate. And who could fail to be impressed by the mouth-watering selection of cheeses, biscuits and crackers? Remember, also, that hotel

rooms can get very dry at night and tap water isn't always the tastiest – one reason to check out the well-stocked mineral water display.

Gift baskets are a specialty of Reid's, and this can certainly work to the advantage of romantic weekenders in Charlotte. If you plan to arrive after early evening on a Friday and you'd prefer to avoid the hassle of finding a restaurant that is open late, give Reid's a call before leaving home. They will put together a food and beverage basket to your specifications and deliver it directly to your hotel room. On arrival you can start unwinding and relaxing, without delay.

Our Suggestion: Kathy has a tradition of purchasing a special ornament for our Christmas tree as a remembrance of each family vacation or romantic weekend destination. If you, as a couple, share this tradition, or if you'd like to make this a new tradition, then look no farther than Reid's on your visit to Charlotte. They stock a Charlotte Trolley Ornament that will be a fine adornment to your tree.

So, there you have Reid's 7th Street Station, a shopping experience certainly but, more than that, a cultural one too.

Before continuing, note in your walking tour guide the numerous other places to visit in the Uptown area. You may have other things on your agenda than a tour and, if so, we'd suggest you pare your sightseeing list down to those that follow. **St. Peter's Catholic Church**, located at 501 S. Tryon Street, was constructed in 1878 and goldminers were among the earliest worshipers. Noteworthy recent additions are the elaborate frescoes painted in 1989, by Ben Long. A short walk back down Tryon Street affords a glance at some other memorable Charlotte landmarks. At **112 S. Tryon Street** is a 20-story building that, at one time, was the tallest skyscraper in the Carolinas. Its ornamental carvings of squirrels and bees are symbols of thrift. On the corner of 200 S. Tryon is the **Jefferson Davis Marker**. In 1865, during the final days of the Civil War, the

President of the Confederate States had reached Charlotte after fleeing Richmond. It was on the site of this marker that he received news of the assassination of President Lincoln. In the next block, at 320 S. Tryon Street, is the **Latta Arcade**, which dates from 1915. Now listed on the National Register of Historic Places, this charming inner court with upstairs offices and the open-air Brevard Court for more prominent tenants, was the brainchild of entrepreneur E.D. Latta.

Those of you who are enchanted by eccentric art forms will want to wander over to the **Carillon Building** at 227 W. Trade Street. Its outdoor sculpture garden and indoor gallery houses the kinetic sculptor Jean Tinguely's delightful *Cascade*. Tinguely (1925-1991), of Swiss nationality, developed a form of sculpture that is almost impossible to describe – especially as each piece is so dramatically different from the other. Simply stated, he put together moving statues that often appear to have been constructed using pieces of metal that could have come from any scrap yard. But, of course, his art is much more complicated and far more entertaining than that. And while Charlotte is an unexpected place to find such sculpture, should you ever travel to Switzerland, you will find that it is especially popular there. The Tinguely-Brunnen Fountain, in the center of Basel, Switzerland, is an eternal favorite for young and old alike and, on our trip to that city in 1998, a mammoth creation dominated the railroad station's ticket forecourt. Those intrigued enough will be sure to plan a trip to the Museum Jean Tinguely, alongside the River Rhine in Basel, where numerous other weird and wonderful conceptions are on display.

Charlotte has been described by some as a little bland. But this area of the city, although the oldest historically, has metamorphosed only recently into a thoroughly modern business center. Consequently, it is still in the process of redefining itself. Uptown's evolution into a vibrant, cosmopolitan center is a success story in progress. And Uptown is just one of Charlotte's neighborhoods. If you consider Charlotte as a total entity, it is a fascinating and charming city.

Dilworth

The first suburb of Charlotte, Dilworth, was developed in the early 1890s. This then-rural area, close to the city, was transformed into a modern resort with lovely homes and the amenities to match. An electric trolley, the first in Charlotte, transported riders to Latta Park from Uptown in just six minutes. Dilworth's growth progressed steadily in the early 1890s, spurred by the opening of the Atherton Cotton Mill in 1892 and, the next year, by the introduction of home ownership on the "building and loan plan" Today it is no less eclectic, with its array of historic homes, restaurants and specialty stores vying for visitors' attention. For just $1 on weekends, you can travel to Dilworth by trolley. Some 60 years after the final run of Car #85 in Charlotte, a new trolley service operates between the Charlotte Convention Center and Atherton Mill in the historic South End.

Elizabeth

This is another district of interest, and of quite a different character. Founded in 1891, it is Charlotte's oldest suburb and its only neighborhood named after a woman, Anne Elizabeth Watts. In 1897, her husband, Gerard Watts, donated a substantial sum of money to build Elizabeth College, a small Lutheran college, on a site now occupied by a Presbyterian Hospital. Subsequently, the 86-acre farm surrounding the college was subdivided and developed by W.S. Alexander and the Highland Park Company. In this community, only minutes from Uptown, charming tree-lined streets are flanked by lovely homes, many of which are historic in their own right. This area also has its share of interesting restaurants.

Nearby, at 2730 Randolph Road, is a museum that is guaranteed to provide you with a visual feast. The **Mint Museum of Art**, ☎ 704-337-2000 or fax 337-2101, is in a building with an interesting history. Constructed in 1836, it housed the first branch of the United States Mint. Later on, it was utilized as a Confederate headquarters and hospital. However, the building was not located on this site during those days. In 1936 the

building was dismantled stone-by-stone, rebuilt here, and opened as the first art museum in North Carolina. In commemoration of its history, a complete set of gold coins minted in the structure is on display. Places such as this can be a little bland and gray, but this museum is not dull. Expect a colorful visual and artistic experience that will definitely brighten your weekend. The continually changing exhibitions, both permanent and temporary, feature artists from throughout the world. Styles may range from classical to modern whimsical and encompass topics from social issues and world cultures to the showcasing of the latest in artistic talent. For information on exhibitions or programs and events call ☎ 704-337-2000. A taped message detailing highlights of current exhibitions and programs may be accessed 24 hours a day by calling ☎ 704-333-MINT (6468). Both the exhibits and the attractive museum shop are open Tuesday from 10 am to 10 pm, Wednesday to Saturday from 10 am to 5 pm and Sunday, noon to 5 pm. The second Sunday of each month allows free admission, and a free one-hour public tour of the permanent exhibitions is given daily at 2 pm.

Tours

If you want to learn more about Charlotte and her suburbs, call **Day Trippin' in the Carolinas**, ☎ 704-543-1300 or 800-354-2468. Since June 1989, each morning and afternoon their guides have conducted entertaining and informative tours of the area. The fee of $20 per person includes transportation from your hotel and a three-hour combination driving and walking tour of Uptown and the suburbs.

Professional Sports

Professional sports lovers will be able to indulge all their passions on a romantic weekend in Charlotted, but dates must be chosen carefully and tickets obtained well in advance. Touch down at the **Ericsson Stadium**, ☎ 704-358-7800, for a Carolina Panthers NFL game or swarm off to the **Coliseum** to watch the NBA's Charlotte Hornets, ☎ 704-522-6500, buzz around their opponents on the court.

These days, the fastest growing sport in popularity is NASCAR. Those seeking the fast track to romance will head out to the very impressive **Lowe's Motor Speedway**. Among the most popular events are the **Winston Cup** championship races. The Coca-Cola 600, the longest race in the series and one of the highest attendance sports events in the country, is held in May and the UAW-GM 500 takes place in October. Tickets for these events are hard to come by and should be ordered many months in advance by contacting the Ticket Manager, Lowe's Motor Speedway, PO Box 600, NC 28026-0600, or call the ticket office at ☎ 704-455-3200.

If you want to enjoy this experience in luxurious surroundings, with fine food and even entertainment, then order tickets for **The Speedway Club**, ☎ 704-455-3240, located on the fifth and sixth floors of the main tower. This is also more conducive to whispering those sweet nothings in your lover's ear. While it is still noisy, it is considerably less so than other places around the track. Among the many other Speedway events is an interesting weekend that combines the GoodGuys Street Rod Nationals with the Legends National Cars races.

Visiting on a race day, or even during event weeks, doesn't allow you to see and learn as much as you could otherwise. To remedy that, take the **Lowe's Motor Speedway Tour**, on Monday through Saturday from 9 am to 5 pm and on Sunday from midday to 5 pm, with closing one hour later during the summer months. The tour includes visits to the garage area, pit road and victory circle, as well as the Speedway's Winston Theater, which offers a video presentation of its history. And, if you are there when the track is not in use, the tour includes a ride around the 1.5-mile speedway, during which you can experience the 24-degree banking first-hand. You may also want to visit the Winston Souvenir Gift Shop, where few will come away without a memento.

Although the Lowe's Motor Speedway is the principal NASCAR attraction, it is by no means the only one. Just north along Highway 29 you will find, set back a little from the road, **Charlotte's Motor Car Museum**, ☎ 704-788-9494. The over 50 vehicles on display are varied enough to interest even those

who aren't too keen on racing. Few will leave disappointed. Visit Monday to Friday, 9 am to 6 pm, Saturday, 9 am to 5 pm and Sunday, 10 am to 5 pm.

Many of the racing teams' headquarters and factories are in the vicinity. One of the most famous and, conveniently, one of the closest is **Hendrick Motorsports**, ☎ 704-455-3400, fax 455-0346. Turn west onto Morehead Road at its junction with Highway 29 just south of the Raceway. Travel one mile, then take a right onto Stowe Lane. There, on Papa Hendrick Blvd., you will find the home of many top Winston Cup cars. You will be able to view the chassis shop to see how these remarkable cars are fabricated. In addition, there is a 15,000-sq.-ft. museum. Among the many items on display are famous cars from the past, present and, hopefully, the future and an exploded car which showcases Hendrick construction techniques. As a final highlight, you may view Schrader's famous car that crashed at a speed of 200 mph on the Talladega Speedway in 1995. Well, better to say you can view its remains, as the only parts of the chassis still visible are squeezed between the wheels. The souvenir and gift shop is open for temptation between the hours of 8:30 am and 5:30 pm, Monday to Friday and Saturday from 9 am to 2 pm.

Now ladies, listen up. This is just for you, especially if you want to ensure that your romantic weekend finishes in the winner's circle. By this time you will surely have noticed a dreamy look in his eyes. Knowing him as only you do, you realize that he is imagining himself in the cockpit of one of those Winston Cup cars, like his idols of past and present, hurtling around the Lowe's Motor Speedway. And how do you think he would respond if you made his dream come true? Well, with the cooperation of one of the most famous names in NASCAR history, you can find out. The **Richard Petty Driving Experience**, ☎ 704-455-9443, fax 455-5343, offers a variety of options that are sure to set any man's pulse racing. Those not wanting to actually get behind the wheel (you must be able to drive a stick-shift car to do so) will gladly settle for the Ride Along Program. For a cost of $89.99, your man is entitled to three laps around the track in one of the two-seater stock cars driven by a profes-

sional instructor. No special reservations are necessary for this speedy experience, as rides are given during any of the scheduled classes. For a more hands-on experience, highly appropriate for a romantic weekend, select one of the following. The *Rookie Experience* is a three-hour, eight-lap program; the *Winston Experience* allows 16-laps; and the *Experience of a Lifetime* will put your man behind the wheel for 30 thrilling laps in three 10-lap sessions. The prices are, respectively, $329.99, $699.99 and $1,099.99. Bear in mind, also, for future travels, that these programs take place at other speedways as well, notably in Atlanta, Las Vegas, Texas, Pikes Peak, New Hampshire, Walt Disney World and Daytona.

A Flight of Fancy

Perhaps, though, the prospect of speed, and the accompanying noise and bustle, leaves you unmoved. Maybe your heart desires a more tranquil form of arousement. If that's the case, then we have just the right ride for you. Far in advance of your weekend call ☎ 704-556-RIDE (7433), and arrange with Darrell Kirkley of **Balloons Over Carolina** to take your romantic weekend to even greater heights. An approximately one-hour flight with an FAA Certified pilot takes off, weather permitting, either just after sunrise or two hours before dusk (for the most romantic sights). For $125 per person, you will be met at a pre-arranged location, whisked aloft to enjoy glorious views while sipping on complimentary champagne, and transported back to the original meeting place. There you will be presented with a flight certificate that makes a great souvenir. All you have to do is remember to take your camera. Sensible clothing is also advised. Balloons Over Carolina suggests you wear full-cover clothes and practical shoes.

Sweet Dreams

Uptown

The Dunhill Hotel, ☎ 704-332-4141, 800-354-4141 and fax 376-4117, is at 237 N. Tryon Street, a prime Uptown Charlotte

site between Independence Square and Discovery Place. Originally opened in 1929 as the Mayfair Manor, it was one of Charlotte's first luxury hotels, with a lavishly appointed foyer and a grand ballroom,. Although it thrived through the Great Depression, it faded somewhat in later decades. In 1987, however, its 60 guest rooms and suites were fully renovated. The aim, successfully accomplished, was a blending of the elegance of a European luxury hotel with American service and comfort. Expect a refined ambiance and beautifully appointed deluxe rooms, a select few of which have Jacuzzi baths and sitting areas, hand-sewn draperies, four-poster beds and commissioned artwork. In 1999 a regular queen room cost $184 per night, while a deluxe one with a whirlpool was $199. Ask about special rates. A special request and a few extra dollars will ensure your stay in the absolute luxury of the Penthouse Suite. Here you can indulge yourselves grandly, taking a romantic meal in the private dining area, cuddling in front of the fireplace, or splashing around in the step-down whirlpool bath. This suite has been undergoing extensive renovation; check for current rates.

The **Hilton Charlotte**, ☎ 704-377-1500, fax 377-4143, reservations ☎ 800-HILTONS, www.hilton.com, is in the heart of Charlotte at 222 East Third Street. In the not-too-distant past this hotel, with its 407 rooms and suites, operated in conjunction with the Westin chain. Two particularly interesting packages were offered recently. The *Bounce Back* at $99 includes a one-night stay and Continental breakfast for two. The *Romance*, at an additional $30, includes a nice bottle of champagne in your room.

The **Holiday Inn Center City**, ☎ 704-335-5400 or fax 376-4921, reservations 335-5400, at 230 N. College Street, offers 300 rooms, including 28 suites, on 15 floors. Rooms are decorated in a variety of styles and some are equipped to accommodate handicapped guests. Rates, in 1999, ranged between $69.95 and $159.95. Look, also, for the Starlite Café, INSIDER$ lobby lounge, a rooftop pool, a fitness center, and convenient indoor parking.

Our Suggestion: Choose the luxurious Presidential Suite, and inquire about their special romance package, Heart to Heart, which includes champagne and room service breakfast. This costs between $125 and $165.

Dilworth

Back in 1907, the energetic Charles Coddington drove from New Jersey to Charlotte in the first Buick seen south of the Mason-Dixon Line. Along the way he stopped at a drugstore in Greensboro, NC, where Marjorie Lyon caught his eye. He immediately put his business plans on hold until he could arrange to meet her. That meeting went so well that the next year they were married, and made their home in Charlotte. The automobile business he subsequently founded, with exclusive rights to the distributorship of Buick cars in the Carolinas, made them a fortune. In 1917, Charles and Marjorie commissioned the British-born architect William Peeps to design a house for them that was, literally, built for entertaining. It served as a private residence until 1980. Four years later, it was transformed into **The Morehead Inn**, ☎ 704-376-3357, 888-MOREHEAD, fax 335-1110 and www.w3link.com/moreheadinn. Located at 1122 East Morehead Street, this gracious 14,000-sq.-ft. home offers guests a hospitable combination of royal elegance and Southern style. It is officially registered as a Charlotte Historic Landmark.

In the main house, the first level consists of the expansive Great Room and its glittering Czechoslovakian chandelier, the Library, the Dining Room, and the Tea Room. Here, also, is the impressive Solarium Suite, which creates an enticing ambiance for a romantic weekend with its private entrance, king-sized bed, hand-painted tile floor, and a sitting room with a sunken whirlpool bath. Seven ultra-elegant guest suites, each of which has a queen-sized bed and private bath, surround a Reading Parlor, on the second floor. Across the courtyard from the Main House is The Carriage House, with two suites on each of its two floors. On the ground floor, The Hawthorne boasts a

king-sized 1820 brass bed and The Worthington, with a queen-sized bed, is embellished with antique golf paraphernalia. Upstairs, The Kingston and Atherton Suites, both romantic spots, each have a queen-sized bed. The former has a bath and shower, the latter just a shower. All the suites have cable TV, telephone service with data ports, central air and heating and ceiling fans; a Southern Continental Breakfast is included in the tariff. Rates range from $100 to $225 a night.

Elizabeth

This area is among our favorites and is conveniently just a few moments from downtown. One of the very pleasant detached houses here is home to a B&B of much charm. Built in 1923, **The Elizabeth B&B**, ☎ 704-358-1368, 2145 East 5th Street, offers a choice of four comfortable rooms with private baths. Each is pleasingly decorated and brimming with a treasure trove of personal collections, antiques, books and artifacts. Modern amenities vary. One room has a TV and phone, while another just a phone – but all offer the comfort of air-conditioning and ceiling fans. Joan Mastny, the amiable innkeeper, serves a breakfast of gourmet English muffins, assorted homemade breads, fresh seasonal fruit, juice, and your choice of hot beverage. Virginia ham sausage is optional on weekends. As an added bonus, the prices are reasonable indeed, ranging from $80 to $105.

South Park

It is either a happy coincidence or, more likely, typical attention to detail that Charlotte's singular Mobil Four-Star and AAA Four-Diamond-rated hotel also has an enticing array of special packages that will interest romantic weekenders in Charlotte. **The Park**, a Bissell Hotel, ☎ 704-364-8220, 800-334-0331, fax 364-8220, 2200 Rexford Road, has 194 rooms and suites. Throughout the hotel you will find yourselves enveloped in a privileged world of privacy and elegance.

If, so far, you are resisting temptation, consider one of the four *Ultimate Romance* packages. All include complimentary bubble bath and votive candle, the use of thick terry cloth robes, and specialty chocolates and a red rose on your pillow each evening. Packages are priced per couple, per night, and include tax and gratuity.

A *Classic Beginning*, at $195, will start you off in a deluxe room with a bottle of The Park's house wine, then pamper you the following morning with a full breakfast in bed. For an additional $80 you can upgrade to include dinner for two in Morrocrofts, The Park's fine restaurant. Should you fancy a little more room to cavort, the *Old Fashioned Romance* package may be the one for you. You'll stay in a beautiful Executive Suite appointed with an antique four-poster king-sized bed. And a faux fireplace in the parlor is sure to add a truly romantic glow to the weekend. The $295 price tag includes a bottle of The Park's house wine, a 20% discount in the restaurant and a full breakfast in bed. Sound enticing? We've got one better. Make the most of your privacy with the *Suite Memory* package. For $375, you can indulge yourselves with a candlelit dinner complete with a bottle of house wine, served, most romantically, in your Executive Suite. The following morning the two of you will enjoy breakfast in bed. Still more luxurious is *Sweethearts Dream*; it will place you in the sumptuous Park Suite, whose elegant sitting room is adorned with antique furnishings and

original artwork, providing an ideal place to relax with that bottle of wine. It also includes, for $495, dinner for two in the restaurant and breakfast in bed the next morning.

Our Suggestion: If you're prepared to spend the $495, pay just $55 extra for the ultimate The Park has to offer – the opulent Presidential Suite, with its garden tub and formal dining room. This suite has actually been occupied by Presidents Ford, Bush and Reagan.

Finally, The Park offers a package tailor-made for those who prefer to combine such luxury with a wealth of personal pampering. The *Deluxe Spa* package, at $395 a couple, includes accommodations in a king- or double-bedded room, full American breakfast buffets and, for each lover, a deluxe manicure, a full body massage with aromatherapy and a European facial. What couple contemplating a romantic weekend wouldn't be tempted by the thought of this?

The **Hyatt Charlotte at SouthPark**, ☎ 704-554-1234, 800-233-1234, fax 554-8319, at 5501 Carnegie Boulevard, is yet another enticing option in the prestigious SouthPark business district. It has 262 lushly appointed rooms – including four suites, and features a magnificent four-story atrium set amidst beautiful gardens and fountains, an indoor pool, and a fully equipped exercise facility with sauna. On-site dining is available in the award-winning Scalini, which features Northern Italian cuisine, and in The Club, which provides a casual ambiance for cocktails and conversation. The *Romance Package*, at a surprisingly affordable $139 per couple per night, includes a deluxe guest room, champagne for two and presentation of a rose to the lady upon arrival, turndown service with chocolate-dipped strawberries and breakfast served either in bed or in the Scalini restaurant. You also get the benefit of a late check-out.

Tables for Two

Uptown

In our travels we seek out hotels and restaurants of the highest quality. This is particularly relevant to the Romantic Weekend guides. While we try to recommend places across the spectrum of price and style, loving couples usually want something a little extra special or a bit out of the ordinary, and they are prepared to pay for it. Accordingly, we concentrate our search on places that fit those criteria.

The **McNinch House**, at 511 N. Church Street, ☎ 704-332-6159, in the city's historic Fourth Ward, is listed on both the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Register and the National Register of Historic Places. It was built in 1892 at a cost of $35,000 – astoundingly expensive for that day. Beginning in 1902, this magnificent home served as a residence for the eminent Charlotte political family of the same name. The first in a long line of Sam McNinches went on to become mayor of the city. By the late 1970s, however, the home had become just a shadow of its former self. Luckily, one very prescient lady with an eye for Victorian values and a desire to become a restaurateur saw much potential in it. Ellen Davis procured the property and then spent many years lovingly creating an ambiance that transports patrons to the graceful elegance of a bygone era. This involved great sacrifice, both physical and financial. At one point during the process, in the early 1980s, this Charlotte native even worked as a street vendor on S. Tryon Street.

Although blessed with a natural talent in the kitchen, Ellen had no restaurant experience. Fortunately, this was offset by the arrival from Florida of Greg Hardee, who took the position of maitre d' in the late 1980s. They have created a restaurant of the very highest standards and it's one of only two in Charlotte to have won AAA's Four-Diamond designation. This is the place to go for a full evening's dining experience that is, romantically and gastronomically, unsurpassed in our experience. Don't, however, expect to just turn up at the door. Should you do so, you will be turned away, although ever so politely. Dining at

the McNinch House is by appointment only. Call several days before your special date, as the capacity is less than 40 people. When you make your reservation, you will be given a choice of, usually, between six and seven entrées. Inquiry will also be made regarding personal preferences and dislikes and any dietary or allergic restrictions. Your five- or six-course meal will be customized to your tastes. You'll be asked, also, whether your evening out is in celebration of a special occasion. If so, expect a special little treat, and it won't be singing waiters!

Upon arrival at the McNinch House, an effusive greeting from Greg will be followed by champagne and delicious appetizers served in the Parlor. This room foreshadows what you can expect throughout the house – dimmed lights, fireplaces glowing, and antiquities tucked in every nook and cranny. You will notice bottles of wine displayed here and there. An idiosyncrasy of the McNinch House is that, while a high importance is placed on wine here, there is no formal wine list. You can either make your choice from what you see or, perhaps more sensibly, rely upon Greg's expertise. He samples up to 10 new vintages a day and, judging strictly by taste, continually evolves his cellar. He will chat with you about the evening's fare, inquire about personal tastes, and cleverly integrate the two, making appropriate suggestions sure to delight the palate. Privacy goes hand-in-hand with personal service at the McNinch House. Guests with reservations arrive at 30-minute intervals, to allow for a personal greeting by the management, and before you are shown to your table a short tour of the house may be in order.

Fresh flowers adorn each table, and candlelight illuminates an intriguing mix of antique and modern china, crystal and flatware. But don't expect every set to match. This is no ordinary restaurant, and no ordinary standards apply.

As to the cuisine, no matter how discriminating your palate, after six or so courses served over three or more hours, you will leave satiated, physically and esthetically. Each and every gourmet dish is a masterpiece, and Ellen is especially noted for her sauces. The presentation is exquisite. Romantics may even request edible orchids in the salad.

Of course, this extraordinarily romantic dining experience comes with an appropriate price tag. Most recently, dinner carried a fixed price of $89.99 per person, tax and gratuities extra. Wine, by the bottle or in some instances available by the glass, is also extra. It is best to plan on a tab of about $250 for the evening. This may sound like a lot, and it is, but your very special romantic celebration deserves no less. In fact, we would go so far as to say that a romantic dinner at the McNinch House in itself is enough to lure you to Charlotte.

Just three blocks away, by the Square at Trade & Tryon Streets and within the Interstate Tower Lobby, is another restaurant with a decidedly romantic style. In the **Pine Room Restaurant and Bar**, ☎ 704-347-8947, the bar area is uniquely decorated with 55 original oil paintings. They hang from every pine-paneled nook and cranny and illustrate scenes from various Harlequin Romance Novels. In the elegant, but still casual, ambiance of the dining area you may choose from a menu that includes char-grilled steaks, the freshest seafood, lamb chops, pastas and roasted chicken, with prices ranging from $12.95 to $18.95. A good option is *The Performing Arts Special*, a three-course meal that includes a bottle of wine. And, speaking of wine, the wine list here is definitely worth some attention. In addition to by-the-glass selections, there are many American offerings and a small range of up-market, and not inexpensive, French ones. Reservations are accepted, and there is free parking.

A colorful newcomer to the Charlotte restaurant scene is **LaVecchia's Seafood Grille**, ☎ 704-370-6776 or fax 370-0016. At 25 East 6th Street, this establishment occupies, along with Reid's, the first floor of Bank of Americas' new 7th Street Station. And, the décor is, to say the least, intriguing. Steel fish sculptures swim beneath the ceiling and windows display fishy murals, all wrought by the creative imagination of Columbia artist Mike Williams. The edible fare is equally exciting. Obviously, seafood dominates the menu. Lobsters from 1¾ to five lbs. (at $18.50 per lb.), are prominent on the menu – as are oysters from both coasts and from the Gulf, ($7.95, $8.95 and $9.95 per half-dozen, or you may want to order the Three Coast Sam-

pler ($8.95, with two of each) so you can taste the difference. If you don't like seafood, there is a limited selection of steak, pork, lamb, chicken, pasta and vegetarian dishes.

Dilworth

Of the many restaurants in this historic area, we recommend the following. **Castaldi's**, ☎ 704-333-6999, www.castaldi.com, at 311 East Boulevard, is an elegant Italian Bistro within a beautiful old period house that reputedly is haunted. This progressive restaurant, with typical specialties, was voted the "1998 Italian Best," and boasts an award-winning, romantic patio. In fact, the popularity of this location spawned two sister restaurants, one in the University area and the other on Lake Norman. It is open for lunch Monday through Friday and for dinner nightly.

In contrast, around the corner and just down South Boulevard, you will find more modern alternatives. Those who find a brewery attractive will want to investigate the **Southend Brewery & Smokehouse**, ☎ 704-358 HOPS, at 2100 South Boulevard. With a spacious, open floor plan, and the brewery process fully visible, this makes for a perfect stop at lunch time. Any one of the homemade brews will complement perfectly their fairly limited, but nonetheless enticing, menu. Look for wood-oven baked pizzas, smokehouse BBQ specials, and fish or meat prepared on a wood-burning grill.

Back across Dilworth, at 1400 East Morehead Street, you will find the informal **Zydeco**, ☎ 704-334-0755 and fax 372-7041. Open all day Monday to Friday, Saturday in the evening and for Sunday brunch, Zydeco specializes in an eclectic mix of Cajun, Creole and Caribbean delights. Look for such unusual dishes as fried crawfish and fried alligator tails (both $6.95/$12.95, depending on portion size).

Fondue restaurants are gaining in popularity as a new generation discovers this traditional Swiss meal. The **Melting Pot**, ☎ 704-334-4400, at Kings Court Plaza, 901 South Kings Drive, is an excellent example of this genre. Choose a traditional Kirschwasser ($10.95), Swiss ($9.95), Cheddar ($9.95) or even

a Fiesta Cheese ($10.95) fondue, blended tableside and served with French rye and pumpernickel breads, apple wedges, assorted fresh vegetables and your choice of a mushroom salad or chef's salad. Or, perhaps, try an entrée of chicken, steak or seafood ($12.95 to $15.95), cooked in either a fondue court bouillon or a more traditional cholesterol-free canola oil fondue. Either way, you will show more restraint than allowed on a romantic weekend if you can resist a chocolate fondue dessert.

Elizabeth

The **Cajun Queen**, ☎ 704-377-9017, at 1800 East 7th Street, just a few minutes from the downtown area, is a particular favorite of ours, as is the neighborhood. Set in a gracious home, this restaurant has tasty food indeed, and a wonderfully relaxed ambiance. As the name implies, it's styled after a New Orleans restaurant and bar. The cuisine is classic, classy and exciting – plenty of shrimp, of course; gumbo and crawfish; and chicken or shrimp in your choice of special house sauces such as Diane, Creole or Etouffée, and served over rice. Blackened and fresh fried selections round out the menu. Whether or not your selection is hot and spicy, you need no other excuse than temptation to try one of Cajun Queen's special cocktails – some of which are made with exotic multi-liquor concoctions. Also available are Dixie Beer, Dixie "Blackened Voodoo" Lager, and a variety of other domestic and imported brands. Live jazz seven nights a week completes the package. Altogether a lively, relatively inexpensive and fun place to eat.

SouthPark

The **Fishmarket**, ☎ 704-365-0883, 6631 Morrison Blvd., (across from SouthPark Mall), has been serving Charlotte's best seafood since 1981. The menu is extensive, and the chef will be more than pleased to prepare your selection in either a grilled, blackened or broiled style, with entrées generally in the low to mid-$20 range. Nightly signature dishes, using only the freshest fish from the world's marketplaces are featured. If you don't fancy fish, then pasta, veal, beef and chicken dishes are also available. Add to the mix an interesting wine list and a

pleasing ambiance, and you are ensured a delightful dining experience.

Shops, Spas, etc.

A dozen red roses in the hotel room say "welcome to our romantic weekend" in a loving and memorable way. Your partner will really feel special when you declare your admiration more publicly with a dozen waiting on the table at your restaurant of choice. **Baskets & Blossoms**, ☎ 704-372-8892, 800-818-9442 and fax 372-9502, 601 South Kings Drive, Suite L, will be pleased to take your order and arrange delivery. As an extra loving touch, choose a furry friend from among their array of precious stuffed bears to sit alongside and present the card. Proprietress Phyllis W. Long will also be happy to describe for you the various standard designs available in her line of gift baskets. She'll probably suggest the *Romantic Package,* filled with a combination of massage items, a split of champagne and two glasses. If you have something unique in mind, give Phyllis a few guidelines and she'll custom-design a gift basket sure to delight.

If you plan to add a bottle of champagne to your romantic weekend cocktail, you won't have to look far. Before leaving home, you can check out **The Wine Vault**, ☎ 704-334-9463, fax 334-6456. Owner Chris McAuliffe now owns three stores, one at The Arboretum, 8020 Providence Road, and another in the very modern University Place, where you can sit outside and enjoy the ambiance. We recommend you stop by her third store at 813 Providence Road in the Myers Park area. It has a Champagne Corner stocked with a wide range of the delightful bubbly stuff, numerous bottles of domestic and imported wine, an impressive array of beers and the appropriate accessories – including champagne glasses. Chris will be happy to tuck your choices from her assortment of fine cheeses, sausages, salmon, crackers and biscuits into an attractive basket – great for late night snacking or a picnic lunch. The guys, and perhaps some of the ladies, will be pleasantly surprised to find a well-stocked Cigar Corner. If your schedule doesn't permit a visit to The

Wine Vault, then call ahead to arrange for delivery of an order to your hotel room.

European men know, and American men are learning, that slipping into fine lingerie makes a woman feel both pampered and special. An unexpected gift is always a welcome surprise but, especially on your romantic weekend, shopping together for that most intimate of apparel can be great fun. Also, guys, you will be sure of buying the correct size. On this subject, we are pleased to be able to point you in the direction of a unique store – in fact it was voted "Charlotte's Best Kept Shopping Secret" in 1997 and 1998, and was called the "Best Women's Specialty Store in Town" in 1997. **Karen's Beautiful Things**, ☎ 704-542-1412 or fax 542-2374, is in the McMullan Creek Market, Suite 404, at 8324 Pineville-Matthews Road. On their business card they advertise "Wonderful Clothes & Lingerie To Grace Your Body and Romantic Antiques & Art To Grace Your Home." This is one time when you can believe the publicity. There is a profusion of antiques – including richly patinated furniture, exquisite cut glass, beautiful paintings, prints and mirrors, and fine china and silverware – which may be complemented by a variety of modern accent items such as candles. Among the articles of clothing: elegant gowns and evening dresses, hats, whimsical feather boas, and an extensive array of jewelry on display around the cash register.

Finally, there is the Lingerie Section. All the rage in lately has been the Magic Silk line, with a cheetah print. And, you can both have fun with this as it includes styles for both sexes. In the far corner is an area dubbed "Strictly Exotic," with a selection of adult games, toys, massage oils, books and clothes that will excite your imagination. The most adventurous of romantic couples should ask about "The Rabbit," which, according to Karen, was the hottest selling item of the year. Karen's Beautiful Things is open Monday through Saturday from 10 am to 6 pm, and we would suggest you call first to ask for directions.

In the past few years, day spas have proliferated. Such places offer an oasis for physical repose and pampering during your romantic weekend. In Charlotte, Amber Justice-Clark and Donna Clark, a mother-daughter team, have developed **Spa**

South, ☎ 704-376-5002, fax 333-0770, 2041 South Blvd, Suite L. This state-of-the-art facility offers a journey into a world of tranquility and renewal. The selection of fine anti-stress and therapeutic spa services includes a range of massage therapies and facial skin care regimes, as well as a nail center. Consider the therapeutic hydro-treatments. Among these are the *Hydro-Marine Bath* – comprised of the finest marine algae mineral scrub and aromatherapy, and a wide range of body treatments, including a new addition, the exotic *Seaweed Peppermint Body Wrap*. Individual treatments are generally in the $60 to $80 range, although some may be higher.

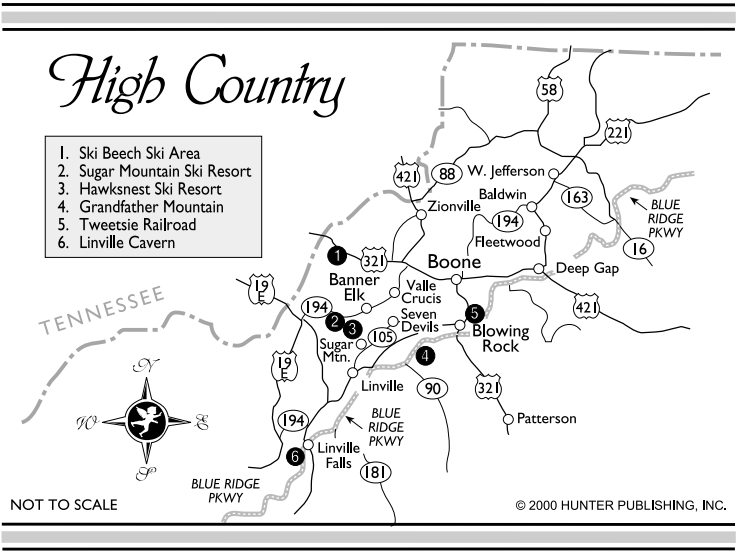
The more discerning will want to enlist the assistance of Spa South's expert staff to design *A Day of Care*, with treatments of your own choice. And Spa South is not just for the ladies; all services are available for men as well. So why not indulge in a dual pampering? It's sure to put you both in a relaxed and refreshed state. Spa South is open on Tuesday to Friday from 10 am to late, and Saturday from 10 am to 4 pm.

Things Victorian have become synonymous with romance, and one of the traditions of that bygone era is afternoon tea. Ring up **La-dee-da's**, ☎ 704-372-5541. You can find it at 1901 Park Drive in Historic Elizabeth. Book a reservation either for La-dee-da's High Tea or for Traditional Tea. We recommend the High Tea. As accompaniments to fine English or Chinese tea, you will be tempted with flaky puff pastries filled with assorted cheeses and seafood; specialty sandwiches of salmon, cucumber, chicken and cream cheese; homemade scones with creamy butter and preserves; an assortment of miniature pastries; dainty tea cookies and, finally, La-dee-da's Fabulous Dessert Finale. The setting for this ambrosial affair is a charming house that is listed on the National Register of Historic Homes.

In your fantasies, have you seen yourself touring the countryside behind the wheel of a Jaguar XJ-S convertible, a loved one in the passenger seat, and the wind whipping through your hair? Or perhaps you picture the two of you en route to some elegant soirée, ensconced in the luxury of an XJ-40 Sovereign sedan. Well, wake up! Lovers on a romantic weekend to Charlotte can, indeed, make those dreams come true, even if for only a

day or a weekend. David P. LaRiviere of **Jag-n-Around**, ☎ 704-334-8390, fax 375-0590 and www.jagnaround.com, 2401 West Morehead Street, is Charlotte's premier independent Jaguar facility. He hit upon the brilliant idea of renting out Series III and XJ-40 sedans and XJ-S convertibles by the day. All cars in his fleet have been thoroughly reconditioned and are utterly reliable. The cost is well within reason. Rates run from $85 to $145 a day, including 250 free miles.

As an added service, David will be happy to offer interesting itineraries around the nearby region. But don't hesitate, other cool cats may have the same idea. If you want to get your weekend off to a roaring start, book your Jaguar now.



High Country

The High Country, in the northwestern section of the state, consists of three counties, Ashe, Watauga and Avery, that run in a north-to-south line from the Virginia border along the border with southeastern Tennessee. The region boasts the high-

est average land elevation in the Eastern United States, with Mount Mitchell (6,684 feet) the highest mountain; Beech Mountain (5,506 feet), Eastern America's highest town; and Linville Gorge, the deepest gorge east of the Mississippi River. Here are found some of the oldest mountains in the world and a wider variety of trees than in all of Europe combined. Scientists credit the diversity of plant life to ancient glaciers, the convergence of climatic zones and sparse settlement. The New River, ironically the second oldest in the world, flows through the region, albeit curiously in a northward orientation.

History

Spanish explorer Hernando DeSoto searched the region for gold in the 16th century. Two centuries later, in the mid 1750s, Bishop Gottlieb Spangenburg of Pennsylvania initially considered that the High Country would make a perfect site for a Moravian settlement, but he settled on Old Salem in Winston-Salem, NC instead. Well-known pioneer Daniel Boone kept a hunting cabin here through the 1760s, and it was he who opened the High Country to new English, Scotch-Irish and German settlers. They came in on the Wilderness Road – one of the most historical trails in the nation's history. Many of these early settlers were fleeing from the harsh British rule in the lower lands. In 1772, with government on their minds, they created their own, thus forming the first independent self-government in America, the Watauga Association. Among the other famous personalities who have made their mark on the High Country are Davy Crockett, who was born in a log cabin by the Nolichicky River; Ben Franklin's brother, who settled in Linville Falls; and Annie Oakley who operated her own shooting range in Blowing Rock.

By the late 19th century, affluent Southern families who had recognized the value of the High Country, with its temperatures 10 to 15° cooler than the lower lands, came by coach and later by rail for their summer vacations here. In response, magnificent hotels and homes came to be commonplace in the small hamlets and towns of the area. Conversely, winter tempera-

tures, usually about 20° lower than on the plain, produce five to eight feet of snow, dependent upon the altitude. This, in combination with the advent of snowmaking technology in the 1960s, gave rise to the skiing industry. Presently, fully half of North Carolina's ski areas are in the High Country.

The geographical scope of this chapter is wider than we normally prefer. That's because the places included, if taken individually, don't offer quite enough to make a full weekend; but, taken in combination, there is plenty to fill a weekend, no matter which season you choose. Most of the places we recommend are concentrated in or around Watauga County, in the central section of the region and not far from each other.

Getting to the High Country is easy, as it is bordered by Interstate I-40 to the south, I-81 to the west and I-77 to the east.

Things to Do

Blowing Rock

A small town with the ambiance of a village, this is far and away the most popular community with visitors to the High Country. It first gained recognition when Civil War soldiers sent their families there to seek refuge from the hostilities. When peace finally came, many returning troops joined their families and made their homes here. Nevertheless, by the mid-1880s the population was still under 100. This was soon to change. By the end of the decade, in 1889, Blowing Rock was chartered and incorporated. Very soon modern boarding houses, hotels and inns sprang up to accommodate the numerous visitors seeking to escape the stifling summer heat of the lower elevations in favor of the cooler temperatures – rarely over 79°. The influx was so great that Blowing Rock became one of the South's leading resort towns, said to be rivaled only by an area of the Florida coast now known as Miami Beach! These days, sitting astride the Eastern Continental divide at an elevation of 4,000 feet, Blowing Rock is the only full service town directly on

the 469-mile Blue Ridge Parkway, which links the Shenandoahs to the north with the Great Smoky Mountains to the south.

This charming picture-postcard place is permanent home to about 1,500 people and to a variety of interesting resorts, hotels, B&Bs, inns and restaurants that cater to all tastes. And, in addition to a plethora of small specialty stores, an outlet mall is here as well.

The **Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce**, ☎ 828-295-7851, 800-295-7851, www.blowingrock.com/northcarolina, is easily found in the center of town. It offers a variety of documentation about the town and the surrounding area. Look for the *Official Blowing Rock Visitor Map Guide*, which, among other things, details a historical walking tour of Blowing Rock.

Without question, the most visited place in these parts is the **Blowing Rock** itself, ☎ 828-295-7111, at Highway 321 South. Situated at 4,000 feet above sea level and overhanging the Johns River Gorge 3,000 feet below, it produces a curious phenomenon of upward-flowing air currents. The walls of the gorge form a flume through which the northwest winds blow with such force that it, in effect, boomerangs objects thrown over the void. It is also the source of a heart-rending legend of a beautiful Indian girl and a Cherokee brave, best read from the back of the brochure while standing at the end of the walkway that hangs precariously over the gorge. From that vantage point, in every direction you will see rolling hills, myriad trees and, notably, the peak of Grandfather Mountain, the highest in the Blue Ridge chain, and the peak of Mount Mitchell, the highest east of the Rockies. Blowing Rock is open daily, May to September from 8:30 am to 8 pm; between December and February, weather permitting and on weekends only, from 9 am to 5 pm; and the balance of the year, daily, from 9 am to 5 pm.

The other main attraction in Blowing Rock is **Moses H. Cone Memorial Park**, ☎ 828-295-7938, at Milepost 294 on the Blue Ridge Parkway. Moses H. Cone, the eldest son of a German businessman and one of 13 children, was born in 1857 in Jonesboro, Tennessee. Both he and his brother, Caesar, were introduced to the textile industry at an early age through their

father's business. In 1891, they formed the Cone Export and Commission Company in New York, but soon relocated the business to Greensboro, NC, where many of their textile products were manufactured. Principal among these were garments made of denim, a new fabric that rapidly became the fashion throughout the country. So popular were these products that Cone soon became known as "The Denim King." His physical condition, however, was not as robust as the denim he produced so Moses and his wife, Bertha, moved to the Blue Ridge area for the healthful climate. They began buying land, eventually acquiring just around 3,500 acres north of Blowing Rock. Here he built three lakes, stocking them with native trout and bass, imported white-tailed deer from Pennsylvania for two parks, created a 10,000-tree apple orchard and began construction of a home. Named "Flat Top Manor" in honor of the nearby mountain, this very impressive 20-room mountain estate was completed around the turn of the century. It was no easy task, either, hauling the lumber and furnishings uphill from the railroad in Lenoir, over 20 miles away, to the estate. Sadly, Moses died soon after, in 1908, at the premature age of 51, although Bertha lived for 39 more years, bequeathing the entire estate to Greensboro's Cone Memorial Hospital upon her death. The hospital, in turn, donated the Moses H. Cone Memorial Park to the US Government in 1950 and, to this day, it is managed within the National Parks System. The magnificent home is worth a visit in its own right. Among its main attractions is a grand curving staircase, made of a single piece of cherry wood that ascends from the foyer. It is home, presently, to a marvelous craft shop operated by the Southern Highland Handicraft Guild, which offers fine handcrafted goods by talented artists of the Southern Appalachians.

The more active will enjoy exploring the 25 miles plus of trails, many of which permit horseback riding – a fun way of navigating the Moses H. Cone Memorial Park and easier on your feet . To get yourself into the saddle, contact **Blowing Rock Stables**, ☎ 828-295-7847, adjacent to the park on Laurel Lane (off Highway 221), just one mile from Moses Cone. They offer the opportunity to enjoy this spectacular scenery on horseback,

with your choice of guided tours lasting one, 1½ or two hours. The park is open daily, between March and October, from 9 am to 6 pm.

Boone

Nearby Boone, named after the famous frontiersman, is much larger than its neighbor. It is situated at a lower altitude, 3,333 feet (one kilometer) above sea level, and has a quite different character. Home to century-old Appalachian State University, with a student population of nearly 12,000, Boone is a quintessential college town with a mix of quirky stores, a vegetarian restaurant, a microbrewery and other such trendy places. But, to be honest, there aren't many places to stay that might be considered romantic.

What may well be of interest, though, is **Horn in the West**, ☎ 828-264-2120, the nation's third oldest outdoor drama, going into its 49th season. Playing in one of the most beautiful outdoor theaters in the country, the Horn in the West relives, on three different stages, the struggles of the rugged late 18th-century mountain settlers and their role in the dramatic events of the American Revolution. The curtain goes up every night, except Monday, between late June and mid-August. At the same site and included in the ticket price for the Horn in the West, you will find the **Hickory Ridge Homestead** – where costumed interpreters demonstrate 18th-century mountain life. Adjacent to the homestead are the **Daniel Boone Native Gardens**, opened in 1966 and sponsored by The Garden Club of North Carolina . For a small admission fee, they offer an impressive and colorful display of the native flora of the Appalachian region. The gardens are open daily, May through October, weather permitting, from 9 am to 6 pm, with closing extended until 8 pm when the Horn in the West is in production. In addition, Appalachian State University presents, each July, ***An Appalachian Summer Festival***, ☎ 828-262-4046 or 800-841-ARTS, which has been named by the Southeast Tourism Society as one of the Top 20 Events in the Southeast. It is entering its 16th season and celebrating the centennial of the University. Distinguishing this from other

festivals are the breadth and quality of the innovative artistic programs, held in and around the campus of ASU.

Of all area attractions, the one that absolutely demands a visit is the truly spectacular **Grandfather Mountain**, ☎ 828-733-4337, 800-468-7325, www.grandfather.com, on US221 and the Blue Ridge Parkway, Linville. While it is not the tallest mountain in the area, at an elevation of 5,964 feet, it is the most dominant. Interestingly, the summit, known as Calloway's Peak, is the meeting point for Avery, Caldwell and Watauga counties. The mountain itself is estimated to be 65 million years old, although portions of the rock underneath have been judged to be 1.2 billion years of age. The peak itself contains one of the most diverse environments in North America, because, in biological terms, it is actually an island. With the retreat of the ice cap, northern species were stranded at its higher elevations while southern species of plants and animals came to consider the neighborhood as a kind of northern boundary. Furthermore, the diverse elevations caused by Grandfather Mountain's rapid ascent to almost 4,000 feet above the Catawba Valley, support quite a variety of life within a geographical area of less than 5,000 acres. In fact, within its boundaries there are 16 distinct habitat types – defined by altitude, weather, forest and topography – which are home to 42 rare and endangered species, including 13 rare and endangered animals, reptiles and insects. And, as over 147 species of birds have been identified here, Grandfather Mountain is one of the most concentrated bird habitats in the southern Blue Ridge.

In sum, given the combination of the above factors, Grandfather Mountain, which the Cherokee once called "Tanawha" (Great Hawk), is one of the most environmentally significant mountains in the world. This has not gone unnoticed by UNESCO who, in November 1992, designated the region an "International Biosphere Reserve," a distinction shared with just 337 sites in 85 countries. In fact, it is the first privately owned commercial property in the program. Each unit, in order to qualify for selection as a Biosphere Reserve, must be a unique resource representative of a larger region, with a legally protected core area that is shielded from unbridled devel-

opment. Grandfather Mountain was so recognized because it is seen as a microcosm of the larger surrounding region.

Within the park itself are attractions aplenty, with enough diversification to appeal to every age and taste. Those with an interest in animals and flora will find seven Environmental Habitats – those for black bears, bear cubs, panthers, bald eagles, golden eagles, white-tailed deer and river otters. Each has been carefully designed to recreate an appropriate setting, with the enclosures built around the animals' actual native habitat. To keep the surroundings as natural as possible, visitors are either separated from the animals by moats or elevated above the habitats on large retaining walls, thus allowing the animals to be viewed from just a few feet away. Among the more ingenious examples is the new otter habitat, that allows visitors to view these fascinating creatures playing above, as well as below, the water. Exhibits and movies found in the nearby **Nature Museum** give a greater understanding of the animals and birds that are native to this mountain. You might take a moment or two, also, to glimpse some of the photographs taken from the summit of Grandfather Mountain. Particularly stunning is one that shows the tops of the skyscrapers in Charlotte – over 80 miles away – peeping above the clouds. And, of course, there is much to enjoy in the **Biosphere Reserve** itself, comprising approximately 4,000 acres of back country and incorporating 13 miles of hiking trails with picnic tables. Whether driving or hiking, expect to come face-to-face with a number of the 120 species of birds and dozens of varieties of animals that call this park home.

Very near the summit of Grandfather Mountain and conveniently accessible by car is the 228-foot **Mile High Swinging Bridge** – which, at an altitude of 5,305 feet is the highest swinging footbridge in America. It was constructed in 1952 to span the 80-foot chasm and thus allow visitors easy access to the breathtaking views from Linville Peak. Although the bridge looks frail, it was designed to withstand a load of three million lbs. – more than enough to carry the limit of 40 persons that has been assigned to it.

For those of you with a passion for statistics, here is some trivia for your data bank. The maximum temperature on Grandfather Mountain was recorded as 83°, with the minimum reaching minus 32°. The strongest winds have reached 175 mph; a maximum 116 inches of snow has been recorded; and the most rain in one day was 6.38 inches.

Grandfather Mountain is open daily, except Thanksgiving and Christmas Days. Visit April through October between 8 am and 7 pm and November through March between 8 am and 5 pm. Be advised, though, that, in winter, roads, paths and walkways will be closed until clear of ice and snow and, when winds consistently reach 60 mph, the road from the museum to the summit, including the Swinging Bridge, will be closed. Tickets may be purchased up to one hour prior to closing time, and we would recommend that you set aside at least two to three hours for a visit.

Throughout the year numerous events are held at Grandfather Mountain. The most famous of these, held each August, is the annual **Grandfather Mountain Highland Games**, ☎ 828-733-1333, www.gmhg.org, which celebrated its 44th season in 1999.

The elevations of Grandfather Mountain are among the first to experience the transition from summer to fall, called here The Fall Foliage Peak Color. Between October 5th and 25th, visitors from far and wide converge to experience this vibrantly colorful natural wonder. A word to the wise, fall traveler – arrive early on weekends.

Turn your thoughts now to **The Blue Ridge Parkway**, an attraction in itself and an intrinsic part of other attractions nearby, which winds its way over 469 toll-free miles from the Shenandoah National Park in Virginia to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in North Carolina and Tennessee. It

was conceived during the Great Depression, when the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933 instructed the Public Works Administration to prepare a program that would include construction, maintenance and improvement of public highways and parkways. It would become the world's first parkway designed exclusively for recreational use, and serve as a model for others both in the United States and throughout the world. Construction, undertaken one section at a time, began in 1935 under President Roosevelt's New Deal Program and, with the exception of the final 7½ miles, was concluded by 1967. That remaining stretch, however, which would circumvent Grandfather Mountain and was known as the Linn Cove Viaduct, presented numerous ecological and technical problems. Work commenced in early 1979 on a 1,243-foot S-shaped viaduct, built over rock formations considered to be among the oldest on earth. By the time it was completed and opened in 1987, what had evolved was the most elaborate concrete bridge ever built. In order to preserve the fragile terrain on the slopes of Grandfather Mountain, construction was accomplished from the top downward, with the only access road being the viaduct itself. It consists of 153 pre-cast concrete segments that measure eight feet long, 37 feet wide and nine feet deep, with only the southernmost segment being straight. Each, cast against the section preceding it, weighs approximately 50 tons, and no two have exactly the same dimensions. Presently, the Blue Ridge Parkway, within a day's drive of half the country's population, is the most visited of all of the 374 units in the National Park System.

Not far south of Grandfather Mountain, between Linville and Marion on Route 221, and just four miles south of the Blue Ridge Parkway are the **Linville Caverns**, ☎ 828-756-4171, 800-419-0540, e-mail cavetwin@wnclink.com, or www.linvillecaverns.com. Here you can get a totally different perspective on a mountain. Informative half-hour guided tours leave just minutes apart and experienced guides will take you along the well-lit, smooth and level walkway into the intriguing interior of Humpback Mountain. You will learn that one element has played the primary role here throughout the ages. Water, containing carbon dioxide, has been responsible for dis-

solving the limestone and dolomite and, in the process, forming the natural passageways and the numerous stalactites and stalagmites in their curious kaleidoscopic formations. Due, in large part, to the constant annual temperature of 52°, the caverns are also home to many forms of cave life, including the Eastern Pipistrelle bat, cave crickets and trout that swim in the clear, cool streams. The Linville Caverns are open between November and March from 9 am to 4:30 pm; April, May, September and October from 9 am to 5 pm; June 1st through Labor Day from 9 am to 6 pm and in December, January and February on weekends only.

While you are in this area, we suggest you stop your car at Milepost 316 on the Blue Ridge Parkway and follow a gentle half-mile trail where, at the end, you will be treated to a marvelous view of **Linville Falls**. There, at the head of the 12-mile-long Linville Gorge, the deepest such gorge this side of the Grand Canyon, the Linville River takes a spectacular 90-foot plunge.

With so much fantastic open country around, outdoor pursuits abound in the High Country. A particular favorite is fly-fishing for local trout. Of the companies that specialize in such trips, we will introduce you to two. The **Foscoe Fishing Company and Outfitters**, ☎ 828-963-7431, e-mail ffco@boone.net or www.foscoefishing.com, is at 9378-1 Highway 105 South, Foscoe. Between Boone and Banner Elk, this is a full-service Orvis-endorsed outfitter. It offers North Carolina Walk Trips at either $75 for a half-day per person or $125 for a whole day per person, with a ratio of one guide for every two guests. Those favoring a float trip will want to consider a Watauga River Trophy Section at $225 for one person or $325 for two. In either case, rates quoted do not include gratuities for the guide(s). Half-day and full-day schools are also held. Bear in mind when making your plans that optimum times for fly-fishing in North Carolina are mid-March through June and mid-September through early November. A stop at the store may still be of interest to those not inclined towards fishing. On offer also is also a wide range of attractive sports clothing and accessories from Orvis, Filson, Sportif, and others. The store, which also acts as

a North Carolina Wildlife License Agent, is open daily from 9 am to 7 pm.

Windmill City Outdoors, ☎ 828-264-0797, located at 3086 Highway 421 South in Boone, just past Mack Brown Chevrolet, offers both fishing and hunting trips designed to suit either beginners or experienced anglers and/or hunters. If your goal is to find some trout – again, with the best times being early spring and fall through winter, consider a half-day or full-day Wade Trip, priced at $75 and $125 per person, respectively. Those angling to catch small mouth bass will do best to visit in summer or in early fall when wade trips targeting that species are set at the same prices as trout fishing and a full-day Float Trip can be booked at $250 for two. All trips utilize artificial bait and operate on the catch-and-release system, using fly or spinning tackle. Rates include lunch on full-day trips but do not include a gratuity for the guide. Springtime is the time to hunt turkey, and we hear that wild ones are very tasty indeed. Half-Day Morning Trips in Watauga and Ashe counties – considered among the best in the state in terms of both harvest and quality – cost $150 per person. Half-Day Afternoon Trips are $50 less. The early season for wood ducks, on both area rivers and lakes, is usually very productive, with a Half-Day Morning Trip (usually flush hunting) costing $75 per person. During the late season, when the goal is to bag other varieties of duck, such as the mallard, the techniques are more complicated, so the Half-Day Morning Trip is $125 per person, for a minimum of two people. If you have your sights set for larger fowl, then aim for Canada geese, with such expeditions costing $125 per person for a Half-Day Morning Trip. As with the fish trips, a gratuity for the guide is not included. Windmill City Outdoors, which also stocks a full line of fishing and hunting gear, is open Monday to Friday from 8 am to 8 pm and on Saturday from 8 am to late.

Still on the subject of sports, but with an entirely different slant, the area boasts four winter ski resorts. As neither of us are skiers, we are ill-qualified to distinguish the merits of one from another. To our minds, they appear to offer similar services and, as such, we will offer only basic information here and leave the choice to those of you who are more knowledgeable.

Sugar Mountain Ski Resort, ☎ 828-898-4521, 800-SUGARMT, www.skisugar.com, has a vertical drop of 1,200 feet (the greatest in North Carolina) and a peak elevation of 5,300 feet. **Ski Beech**, ☎ 828-387-2011 or 800-438-2093, at 5,506 feet, is the highest ski resort in the Eastern United States and has a vertical drop of 830 feet. **Ski Hawksnest**, ☎ 828-963-6561, www.hawksnest.com, near Banner Elk, has a peak elevation of 4,819 feet and a vertical drop of 669 feet. The **Appalachian Ski Mountain**, ☎ 828-295-7828 or 800-322-2373, at Blowing Rock, at the lowest elevation of 4,000 feet, has a vertical drop of 365 feet.

In warmer weather, as the impetus moves rapidly from slope to shore, contact **Appalachian Challenge Guide Service** in Banner Elk, ☎ 828-898-6484 (information), 888-844 RAFT (reservations), www.appnetsite.com/appchallenge.htm, Banner Elk. Experienced and novice whitewater rafters alike will enjoy an excursion on the Watauga River, Section 5, where the classic I-II section combines five miles of fast flowing river with beautiful pastoral scenery. A trip duration of 5½ to 6½ hours, of which 3½ to 4½ hours is actually on the water, costs $39 per adult, with snacks and drinks included. Less popular, but still with a following, are rock climbing and rappelling or caving. Introductory and intermediate trips for the former two cost $60 and $90 per person, respectively; rates for an "Introduction to Caving" trip are $49 per person.

While we would prefer to focus on the region's natural attractions, we realize that others may have different interests. To that end, let us introduce you to the **Tweetsie Railroad**, ☎ 800-526-5740, www.tweetsie-railroad, the Tar Heel State's first theme park, located between Blowing Rock and Boone on US 321, near Milepost 291 of the Blue Ridge Parkway. The park's name makes reference to the shrill whistle given off by Engine Number 12, a historic narrow gauge, coal-fired steam locomotive that once belonged to the East Tennessee & Western North Railroad. At that time, it carried passengers on a 66-mile route through the Blue Ridge Mountains from Johnson City, TN to Boone, NC. That service ended in 1940, however, and, these days, Tweetsie – listed among the National Register

of Historic Places – has been spruced up and moved back to its native mountains, where it takes visitors on an unforgettable three-mile journey through the mountains. A host of other somewhat less authentic enticements, in the form of cowpokes and gunslingers, Indians, can-can girls at the Palace Saloon, a miner's mountain and champion cloggers, round out the park's attractions.

Sweet Dreams

Beech Mountain Parkway

Archer's Mountain Inn, ☎ 828-898-9004, 888-827-6155 or e-mail theinn@archersinn.com, is at 2489 Beech Mountain Parkway. The inn is nestled at an altitude of nearly 5,000 feet, between Banner Elk and Beech Mountains. It boasts incredible views over both Sugar and Grandfather Mountains and is, conveniently, a matter of minutes away from the two highest ski slopes in the Eastern United States. Its 15 guest rooms are found in two buildings with differing characters. The Hawk's View has spacious rooms with cedar beams and rustic décor. Each has a fieldstone fireplace, kitchen efficiency, sitting area and large porch with rocking chairs. The Laurel Lodge, also rustic, will likely be of more interest to romantic weekenders. It features rooms designed for couples, each with stone fireplace and TV, and some with feather bed and goose down comforters. Most enticing among these are the Presidential Suite, with Jacuzzi and private mountain-view porch or the Roof Garden Room, with large Jacuzzi set on a private deck and a rustically romantic ambiance. Rates here vary according to the seasons, but expect to pay $85-$150 in the Hawk's View; $70-$100 in the Laurel Lodge and $125-$200 for either of the Jacuzzi Suites. These prices include a hearty breakfast. Also look for the on-site Jackalope's View Restaurant, described in the *Tables for Two* section.

Blowing Rock

The **Chetola Resort & Conference Center**, ☎ 828-295-5500, 800-CHETOLA (243-8652), fax 295-5529, www.chetola.com, is at PO Box 17, North Main Street. This is a 78-acre private, gated resort just outside the town of Blowing Rock, amidst the Blue Ridge Mountains and 3,600-acre Moses Cone Estate National Park. Its history dates to 1846, when Lot Estes purchased the estate for $5 and named it "Silver Lake." The ensuing half-century brought mixed fortunes, as the property changed hands several times, at one time serving as a way station for horse-drawn mail coaches. Things began to look up, though, at the end of the century when easier access to Blowing Rock encouraged those seeking relief from the heat of the lower lands. Among these was Alabama lumber man, W.W. Stringfellow, who purchased this same estate, commissioned the construction of the existing great Manor House and renamed the property "Chetola" (a Cherokee word meaning Haven of Rest).

In 1924 Chetola was purchased by the "Coca-Cola King of the Carolinas," J. Luther Snyder. Snyder oversaw considerable improvements to the property, including the construction of houses for his family, an outdoor swimming pool and a one-lane bowling alley, all of which were undertaken with the greatest respect for the natural beauty of the estate.

Nearly 60 years later, in 1982, the Renar family purchased the property with a vision of making its grandeur accessible to others. To that end, they proceeded, with meticulous care, to develop the resort in harmony with the history, charm and civilized grace of the old estate – and they succeeded. Incorporated in the central lounge of the Manor House are a fireplace built in the mid-1800s and a portion of the original ceiling preserved from the way station built in 1865. The Chetola Lodge & Conference Center, opened in 1988, is next door, and numerous private homes and luxury condominiums occupy the hills overlooking the lake and mountains.

There are seven classifications of rooms in the Chetola Lodge itself, some of which are handicapped-accessible. On the more modest end is the Hillside guest room, with two queen-sized beds, sitting area and refrigerated wet bar. Most luxurious is the Lakeview Crown Suite with Balcony, which features king-sized bed and queen-sized sleeper sofa, sitting area, dining area, refrigerated wet bar, bath with tiled shower, whirlpool tub, bidet, double lavatories and VCR. Rates vary by season, but in 1999 ranged from $80-$131 for a Hillside guest room to $180-$225 for a Lakeview Crown Suite with balcony. During July, August and October there is a two-night minimum stay on weekends, and three-night stays are required during the peak times of the Memorial Day, Labor Day and Thanksgiving weekends.

If you fancy a bit more privacy, the condominiums are very nice indeed. Options here range from a one-bedroom efficiency to a three-bedroom condominium with a den or a four-bedroom house, with rates varying according to the season. Although a one-bedroom condominium priced at $125-$200 is certainly sufficient, a two-bedroom efficiency condominium with master suite – with king-sized bed in the master bedroom, two queen-sized beds in the guest room, whirlpool tub and a wood-burning fireplace, at $175-$210 – offers considerably more space and luxury. Be aware, though, that during July and August there is a seven-night minimum rental period.

The best value will most likely be the *Sweet Expressions* package, offering three days and two nights in a luxurious Honeymoon Suite, a romantic dinner for two in the historical Manor House restaurant, a bottle of chilled champagne awaiting your arrival and breakfast delivered to your room (if you choose to stay in the Chetola Lodge). The price is governed by your choice from among three classes of room – a Lakeview Crown Suite, a Lakeview guest room with balcony or a one-bedroom condominium, and upon the season. Prices are as follows: In the "High Season" (June 11-August 31, October 1-October 31 or

December 24-January 2), expect to pay $525-$590; in the "Mid Season" (April 30-June 10, September 1-September 30 or November 1-December 23), $427-$536; and in the "Special Off Season" (January 2-April 30, $348-$444.

Guests will enjoy dining in the Manor House restaurant (see below) and relaxing at the Highlands Sports & Recreation Center, with its heated indoor pool, spa, sauna, fitness center, pool table, ping-pong table, lending library, board games, video game room and massage facilities. Other activities include mountain bike rentals, tennis, racquetball, horseback riding, and numerous hiking trails – from easy to strenuous – and boating or fishing on Chetola Lake. Most romantic indeed is a quaint gazebo overlooking the lake – the perfect spot for a picnic for two. In sum, the Chetola Resort at Blowing Rock is an oasis of calm in a naturally beautiful setting.

The **Meadowbrook Inn**, ☎ 828-295-4300, 800-GO Romance (456-5456), www.meadowbrook-inn.com, found on Main Street, is the second-largest privately owned resort property in Blowing Rock. Setting it apart are some uniquely extravagant rooms, unlike any we have seen in our travels. In the Main Building there are several attractive options. The Standard Room, with king-sized bed, rents for $119 between April and November and $89 during the rest of the year. A Deluxe Room, at $129, features king-sized bed and whirlpool tub for two. A Suite, at $139, has four-poster king-sized bed, adjoining living room and spacious bath. A Deluxe Suite, at $159, has a four-poster king-sized bed, adjoining living room, gas fireplace and whirlpool tub. Romantic weekenders would do well to look toward the Annex, opened in early 1997, for their delights. Here, the choices are a Deluxe King Room, with king-sized bed, queen-sized sleeper sofa, gas fireplace, sunroom and bath with whirlpool for two, at $139; an Executive Suite, with a master bedroom and a king-sized bed, living room, gas fireplace, wet bar, microwave oven, refrigerator, patio and bath with whirlpool for two, at $169; or a Two-Bedroom Suite, with similar facilities, at $189.

These are nice, but we promised uniquely extravagant. For that, we saved the best for last. Renting at $259 are the Pool

Suites, the best that the Meadowbrook Inn has to offer. These have a bedroom with king-sized bed, living room with queen-sized sleeper sofa, gas fireplace, wet bar, microwave oven, refrigerator, patio and a bath with whirlpool tub for two. You will descend from the living room by way of a spiral staircase to your own private swimming pool – eight feet wide, 16 feet long, and four feet deep! While the pool doesn't allow for diving, it definitely gives you scope to stretch your romantic imaginations.

The Meadowbrook Inn also has a fully equipped fitness center, a full-sized indoor pool and Jacuzzi, and bicycles available for around-town use. Guests should not leave without paying a visit to the Artist's Palate Restaurant (described in detail below) or sampling one of the many delightful concoctions offered at the cocktail bar.

The Victorian Inn, ☎ 828-295-0034, www.the-victorian-inn.com, 242 Ransom Street, is nestled in the heart of Blowing Rock. It is set in an elegantly restored Victorian home just a short walk from the stores on Main Street. Don't be surprised if the exterior seems familiar – it is one of the town's most photographed buildings. Inside are six spacious guest rooms, beautifully decorated and furnished with either king-sized or queen-sized beds. Each has ceiling fan, cable TV, small refrigerator, quality linens, luxurious comforters and plush towels. Other amenities vary from room to room, but may include sunroom, sitting area or private balcony. Two feature a large garden tub and three have gas log fireplaces. Weekend rates are either $129 or $139, including a lavish breakfast, afternoon tea and complimentary wine. A two-night minimum stay is required over special holidays or weekends. Finally, a word to the wise.

While smoking is permitted on the porch, decks, balcony and grounds of the Victorian Inn, if you are caught in the act in a room, expect a hefty $75 surcharge to cover the cost of dry cleaning and carpet shampooing.

Westglow Spa, ☎ 828-295-4463, 800-562-0807, www.westglow.com, 2845 Highway 221 South, is on a historic

20-acre estate, the centerpiece of which is a magnificent mansion built in 1916 by the architect and contractor J. Lee Hayes. As will be immediately obvious, no details were spared in its construction. In fact, the graciously towering Grecian columns that adorn the façade were shipped by barge from Italy and hauled by oxen up the mountains to this imperious setting. The foyer and stairwell, designed by a notable French architect of the day, are noted for the dramatic vistas from the stairway-landing window. It was later the summer home of famous artist and writer Elliott Daingerfield, who credited its views as providing inspiration both for his writing and his paintings. And it was Daingerfield who gave the estate its name. "Westglow," he reasoned, aptly described the beautiful sunsets over Grandfather Mountain that he so enjoyed from the front porch. Furnishings in the home today are, in large part (nearly 80%), originals from the Daingerfield years, as are the 2,200 books that are available for guests in the library.

Westglow's current owner, Glynda Valentine, purchased the property in 1978. Although she intended that this would be her family home, she later decided to make it into a European-style spa where people could stay – in other words, a healthy year-round camp for discerning adults. Drawing upon a quarter-century's experience in managing fitness centers in the South, she set about erecting, on the same spot where Daingerfield had his studio, the Life Enhancement Center – a state-of-the-art facility for fitness and therapeutic programs, designed to reflect the graceful architecture of the Manor House. Among its facilities are an indoor pool for lap swimming and water aerobics, a fitness center with Cybex weight training machines and other equipment, whirlpools, saunas, body treatment rooms, a hair and nail salon, testing clinic, men's and women's lounges, an aerobic studio and a poolside café. Outside, there are tennis courts and a croquet court. In concert, these beget an environment deliberately designed to cultivate slow pace and intimate ambiance. The range of services – including body treatments,

facials, hair and nail services and water aerobics – is comprehensive. Then there are the Fitness Services, which include fitness assessment and exercise prescription, nutrition assessment and diet consultation and, more unusually, a Supermarket Tour – which entails instruction by a dietician in the selection of healthy foods, followed by cooking classes.

Although the term "spa cuisine" conjures up images of bland, Spartan foods, that is far from what you will find at Elliott's, the intimate restaurant at Westglow. The management views food as an integral part of the spa experience and considers good nutrition intrinsic to the quality and harmony of life. Accordingly, cuisine naturelle, wholesome fresh food, is delightfully presented both in the formal dining room and, in agreeable weather, on the porch. The menu, ever changing and seasonal, highlights foods high in fiber, carbohydrates and proteins – largely from vegetable and grain sources, prepared with a minimum of fat, sugar and salt. The concentration is on the ratio of fat to calorie count, with the aim of keeping the total fat calories to less than 20%. Three portion sizes are available for each entrée. The *Spa Portion*, which is standard, includes four-five oz. of meat and slightly smaller than normal restaurant servings of veggies and starch. The *Weight Management Portion* consists of two-three oz. of meat, with starches and veggies reduced accordingly. Finally, the *Restaurant Portion* offers six-seven oz. of meat, with veggies and starches increased proportionally. Requests for ingredients such as caffeine, butter or salt will be accommodated, albeit reluctantly. As far as alcohol is concerned, brown bagging is permitted as long as it is in compliance with county liquor laws.

There are Day Packages, such as the *Westglow Sampler,* with a choice of one spa service for $120; the *Deluxe Sampler*, which, at $185, allows you the choice of two spa services; and the *Day Guest*, with a choice of three spa services for $250. Each also includes the use of all spa facilities, and will certainly appeal to romantic weekenders choosing to stay elsewhere. But spa lov-

ers will want to give serious consideration to an all-inclusive *Resort Package*. This includes luxurious accommodations – in either the Main House or one of two cottages, three gourmet spa cuisine meals daily, use of all spa resort facilities, daily supervised sessions in the fitness center, fitness classes, group activities and morning nature hikes. The season, the number of nights and the number of treatments govern the rates. The Two-Night Package, which seems tailor-made for a romantic weekend, includes three spa services per person. In Peak Season, between April-October, and including Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's holidays, the cost is $715. The Off-Peak rate, in effect between November and March (exclusive of holidays), is $638. All prices quoted are per person, inclusive of taxes and gratuities and assume a two-night minimum on weekends.

A comfortable environment is encouraged, with casual attire, slacks and sport coats for men and skirts or slacks for women welcomed in the dining room; bathing suits are required for saunas, whirlpools and the indoor pool and hiking boots recommended for intermediate and advanced hikes.

Fleetwood

The **River Farm Inn**, ☎ 336-877-1728, e-mail innkeepers@riverfarminn.com, www.riverfarminn.com, 179 River Run Bridge Road, Box 2, Fleetwood, is not as conveniently located as some. It is found about 12 miles east of Boone, a few minutes from Todd, and a bit afield from area attractions, but is worth serious consideration. In 1913, when the farmhouse, nestled along the South Fork of the New River, was built as a home for the Norris family, it was accessible only by a swinging footbridge. Suzie and Monty Matthews, who purchased the home in 1989, invested seven years renovating it in a Country Victorian style. Also on the property is an 1880s barn, constructed originally in Winston-Salem where it served as a dairy for the

Oak Summit Farm. The Matthews bought half of it, had it transported here and, in a project that spanned two years, fashioned within its framework and beneath the old barn's trusses an innovative new interior. Since its completion in 1998 it has housed the delightful and very comfortable French Country and Victorian Suites. The Victorian Suite, on the barn's south side, features fine antiques and beautiful replicas of the Victorian era, while The French Country Suite, on the north side and finished in a décor reflecting its name, boasts picturesque views of the New River and the surrounding valley. Both suites offer a queen-sized bed, full kitchen, gas log fireplace, ceiling fans, 12-foot palladian windows, private dining area, satellite TV, CD player, washer/dryer access, sitting area, central air and heat and, for a really romantic touch, Jacuzzi tubs. Other amenities include a "welcome basket" filled with coffee, beverages, fresh fruit and baked goods; toiletries; hair dryer; fine linens; telephone; and the use of terry robes. Rates for the suites between January and May are $135 to $155 per night and, the remainder of the year, $135 to $185 per night, excluding tax. A two-night minimum stay is required on weekends and a three-night minimum is required over holidays.

Our suggestion: The Carriage House Suite , the newest addition, has facilities comparable to the other suites, including a large Jacuzzi tub, and offers an excellent view of the river and flower gardens. Call ahead to inquire about availability and prices, which hadn't been established at press time.

Valle Crucis

The **Mast Farm Inn**, ☎ 828-963-5857, 888-963-5857, fax 963-6404, e-mail stay@mastfarminn.com, www.mastfarminn, 2543 Broadstone Road, Valle Crucis, offers an alluring mixture of history and charm. The farm itself has its origins in the late 1700s when Swiss immigrant, Joseph Mast, continuing on from his first stop in North Carolina's Piedmont region, arrived in Valle Crucis and traded his possessions for 1,000 acres of

rich Watauga River Valley land. His first house, a two-room log cabin built around 1812 and still standing today, is one of the oldest inhabitable log cabins in western North Carolina. The farm, which prospered through the 19th century, was passed on to Finley and Josephine Mast, who began construction of the farmhouse in the 1880s. By the turn of the century, this enterprising pair had begun to offer meals and rooms to tourists. So successful was this venture that, by 1915, the house had been expanded to include 13 bedrooms – but with only one bath. Josephine Mast, affectionately called Josie, in addition to managing the house and running the vegetable garden and dairy, was an accomplished master weaver. She plied this trade in the original log cabin that she converted into a loom house. Her highly celebrated work was displayed in the White House during the term of Woodrow Wilson.

After the deaths of Finley and Josie in the 1930s, the inn was closed, although the younger of their two sons, Joe, who was blind, lived there until 1964. From that time until 1984, with the exception of some brief periods when it was rented, it stood deserted. In that year, Francis and Sibyl Pressly, who planned to restore it for use as an inn, purchased the home with the remaining 18 acres of land. The present owners, Wanda and Lyle Schoenfeldt, who had returned to North Carolina after living in Texas, acquired the Mast Farm in 1996. These days Wanda and her sister Kay function as joint innkeepers.

While the farmhouse itself is readily recognizable for its style, the four other structures on the property are somewhat deceiving in their appearance. From the outside they look like antique farm buildings, which is exactly what they are. In fact, in 1972, the Mast Farm was listed on the National Register of Historic Places as "one of the most complete and best preserved groups of 19th-century farm buildings in western North Carolina." The interiors of the outbuildings, however, have been tastefully converted into private cottages, with amenities such as refrigerators, beautiful quilts, claw-foot tubs and showers, cozy fireplaces and inviting rockers on the porch. Any one of the four is an ideal spot for a romantic weekend. Beyond its delightful wraparound porch, the Farmhouse features nine more guest rooms, each decorated uniquely, all featuring private bath; some have a fireplace and soaking tub for two. Among the cottages, The Loom House, Blacksmith Shop and Woodwork Shop rent for $155-$195 per night, while The Granary runs $135-$175 per couple with a four-person occupancy. The price for the nine Country Farmhouse rooms is $100-$165. Rates include a country breakfast with the chef's choice of three-grain pancakes, omelets or French toast and fresh fruit. Among the inviting public rooms are a third-floor sitting room with game tables, a sunroom on the second floor overlooking the valley and a parlor. Not least of the attractions, though, is the restaurant, described more fully on page 99 and featuring Chef Scott Haulman's New Appalachian Cuisine.

Tables for Two

Banner Elk

The **Louisiana Purchase Food & Spirits**, ☎ 828-898-5656 or 963-5087, Highway 184, Banner Elk, has a New Orleans style in both décor and cuisine. Dine upstairs, where you will be serenaded by romantic jazz tunes, or on the lower level, which is better suited to quiet conversation. Among the unusual appetizers are grilled vegetable and goat cheese tart – flaky tart dough filled with crimson lentil royale, topped with assorted

fresh grilled vegetables and crumbled Montrachet goat cheese, and served with wild greens and infused oils ($7.95); fried alligator – crispy, tender strips of alligator tail meat served with stewed okra, corn and tomatoes ($6.95); and, for oyster lovers, Oysters Oak Street – fresh Nova Scotia Malpeque oysters topped with creamed spinach, crispy pancetta and Gruyere cheese, baked on the half-shell ($7.95). The soups and salads have a similar flavor, as do many of the entrées, which include jambalaya – shrimp, sea scallops, chicken, crawfish and andouille sausage combined with rice, vegetables and Creole sauce and then baked ($15.95); shellfish court-bouillon – a Creole bouillabaisse with lobster, littleneck clams, mussels, snow crab claws, shrimp and crawfish, served with Louisiana popcorn rice ($25.95); and Cajun seafood étouffée, large shrimp and sea scallops, sautéed crawfish tail meat, shallots, and green onions in an étouffée sauce, finished with Béarnaise sauce ($17.95). The menu also accommodates those with a preference for less exotic dishes, and there are nightly additions such as roast rack of lamb. The complete wine list, which can feature more than 850 vintages, will certainly need some perusal, but there is also a selection of red and white wines from the cruvinet, in three- or seven-ounce sizes. The owner, Mark Rosse, delights in arranging special wine dinners that may run to six courses and six wines, and cost $75 per person. Louisiana Purchase is open for dinner on Sunday through Thursday from 6 pm to 10 pm and on Friday and Saturday from 6 pm to 10:30 pm.

Beech Mountain Parkway

Jackalope's View at Archer's Mountain Inn, ☎ 828-898-9004, 2489 Beech Mountain Parkway, between Banner Elk and Beech Mountain, offers an enticing combination of fine dining and spectacular mountain views. The 1999 summer/autumn menu featured such tasty appetizers as crab-stuffed mushrooms – mushrooms stuffed with lump crab mixture topped with fresh Parmesan cheese and finished in the oven ($7); bruschetta – four pieces of seven-grain bread, toasted, then covered with fresh Roma tomatoes marinated in garlic oil,

sprinkled with Parmesan and fresh basil chiffonade ($5); and escargot en pain – escargot with garlic cream sauce and fennel served in a fresh baked roll ($7.50). Among the entrées we fancied are beef tenderloin Rochambeau – medallions of Angus filet prepared on top of prosciutto, French baguette and demi-glace topped with Béarnaise sauce, served with herb-roasted potatoes and fresh asparagus spears ($20); and native grain cake – cakes of cornmeal, quina, and wild rice over heirloom beans with fresh seasonal vegetables ($17). A side salad with dinner is $1.50 extra, or for $5.50 you can try either the mixed green salad with peppered strawberries, blue cheese crumbles, red onion and port vinaigrette, or a fresh mozzarella salad with mixed greens, grilled eggplant and raspberry balsamic vinaigrette. Expect to find a comprehensive wine list, imported and micro-brewed beers and special cappuccino concoctions. Dinner is served Tuesday through Sunday beginning at 5 pm.

Blowing Rock

The **Artist's Palate**, ☎ 828-295-4300, located at the Meadowbrook Inn on Main Street, is far from a run of the mill hotel restaurant. Although it opened in 1997, it has already developed a reputation as a place where fine art and fine food meet. This is due primarily to the very tasty dishes of executive chef Tom Harley, which find their basis in Continental cuisine and their inventive flair in his imagination. The menu recently featured such appetizers as rope cultured mussels – sautéed mussels in a white wine sauce with roasted garlic and fire-roasted sweet bell peppers; and scallop jalapeño Napoleon – seared sea scallops stacked with jalapeño and cilantro between crisp garlic-herb tortilla triangles and served with a zesty chipotle-lime aïoli (each $5). Unusual entrées are too numerous to list, but we especially liked the look of polenta-crusted boneless quail – peach stuffed and served with an apricot brandy sauce ($16); scallion-encrusted halibut with a mango-champagne coulis ($17); and stuffed artichoke – fresh artichoke filled with a celery-pine nut stuffing and topped with lemon juice and fresh herbs ($15). The wine list is just as eclectic and has a choice of many vintages. Dinner is served nightly

from 6 pm. On Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights between 6 pm and midnight, a sushi bar is offered.

The **Best Cellar**, ☎ 828-295-3466, is found in a pretty wooded hillside location, above the local Food Lion supermarket and just off the Highway 321 By-Pass. For 23 years this restaurant has been serving up a comprehensive menu in an agreeable ambiance, developing a reputation for consistency. Appetizers include such imaginative tastings as marinated Brie – a small wheel of French Brie marinated in olive oil, roasted red peppers and fresh herbs, grilled and served with gourmet crackers; and succulent quail sautéed with pine nuts, sun-dried tomatoes, Shiitake mushrooms and goat cheese. Entrées, which are served with a house salad, homemade bread and a choice of vegetable and rice pilaf or parsleyed new potatoes, include fowl, beef, seafood and veal. We suggest you try the roast duckling, succulent, boned and crisp, served with the chef's sauce of the day; fresh grouper stuffed with smoked Gouda cheese, topped with roasted almonds and baked in lemon pepper seasonings and white wine; or Veal Oscar, lightly flavored fresh prime scallopini of veal sautéed in olive oil and topped with a generous portion of crabmeat, fresh asparagus and sauce Bearnaise. The wine list, in addition to a range of house wines, leans heavily toward American vintages, but with a fair number of French, Italian and even Australian options. The Best Cellar is open for dinner, from May to November, Monday through Saturday, and the rest of the year, Thursday through Monday, from 5:30 to 10 pm. Reservations are definitely suggested, and there is complimentary valet parking.

The **Manor House** at Chetola Resort, ☎ 828-295-5505, 800-CHETOLA, www.chetola.com, North Main Street, Blowing Rock, offers fine dining in a casually elegant ambiance, either inside or outdoors on the stone patio overlooking beautiful Chetola Lake. The dinner menu is extensive, and features a variety of categories. Among the appetizers you might try are the petite wheel of Brie encased in puff pastry, puddled in Amaretto and strawberry glacé and topped with toasted almond slices ($7.50); or the three trout cakes, hickory smoked and sautéed, finished with fresh garlic herb butter ($7.25). The "From

the Mountains" entrées offer three trout selections, including boneless mountain trout stuffed with a herb vegetable mirepoix, baked to a golden brown and served with a meunière sauce ($18.95). We liked the fresh tuna, pan-seared and flashed with Tabasco sauce and pure clover honey, served over mixed baby greens ($19.95). The New Zealand rack of lamb – four double thick lamb chops grilled to your specifications, then finished with the chef's signature chutney, flavored with fresh ginger, chopped pecans, mint leaves, Rome apples, minced pineapple, dark brown sugar and honey ($23.95) – was outstanding. Also excellent was the cornbread-crusted breast of duck sautéed in extra virgin olive oil, French cut and finished with a black cherry and currant dressing ($21.95). The wine list here is extensive, with numerous wines by the glass. The Manor House is open for dinner, daily, from 5:30 to 10 pm and for Sunday brunch from 11:30 am to 2 pm.

537 Main, ☎ 828-295-6004, www.537main.com, is indeed found at 537 North Main Street, just a short distance from downtown Blowing Rock and immediately opposite the entrance gate to the Chetola Resort. Situated in a pleasant old house, the décor, subdivided into small dining rooms, is stylish indeed. It has been operated since November 1998 by Jennis Heal and his wife, who both hail from Boston and specialize in a mix of New England and modern French cuisine. The menu, featuring an interesting mix of appetizers, salads and entrées, changes weekly, but you can expect to find the following kinds of dishes. Appetizers include seared sea scallops with warm potato and red onion salad with parsley oil ($11); yellowfin tuna tartare, with vidalia onion, parsley and local greens ($9); or smoked salmon and pear salad, with pecans and local spring greens ($9). The entrée list was so tempting, we had difficulty deciding, and we suppose you will, too. It included pan-roasted Denver rack of lamb with wild mushroom and spinach risotto ($29); cast iron-seared pork loin, with white beans, pancetta and thyme ($20); and black pepper-encrusted dry aged sirloin, with mashed new potatoes and fresh spring vegetables ($24). The wine list features mainly California vintages, but with a sprinkling from France and Australia. Many of these are of-

fered by the glass. 537 Main is open for dinner, nightly, between 5 and 10 pm, and reservations are suggested.

There are no prizes for guessing what specialties predominate at the **Speckled Trout Café & Oyster Bar**, ☎ 828-295-9819, Main Street, Blowing Rock. Established since 1986 and in a convenient location at the junction of Main Street and Route 221, it has an easygoing ambiance inside, and a pleasant terrace outside. Appetizers include fresh local rainbow trout smoked with hickory and apple on the premises, served with capers, scallions and horseradish dill sauce and crackers; or French snails sautéed in garlic butter, white wine and herbs, then baked under a puff pastry blanket (both $5.95). Pastas include ricotta-stuffed pasta served on a bed of linguini and crabmeat, topped with a homemade marinara sauce ($12.95); and an unusual shrimp and sausage stir-fry – four large gulf shrimp sautéed with Italian sausage, sweet peas, carrots and mushrooms in a white wine lemon-butter sauce and served over linguini ($14.95). Although there are plenty of pork, poultry and steak dishes to choose from, those of you with the taste for trout should definitely try the fresh, locally raised rainbow trout, prepared pan-fried, broiled or baked ($11.95), or stuffed with shrimp, crabmeat and herb butter, then baked ($14.95). If oysters are your thing, then look for either fried oysters – a dozen select oysters lightly breaded, deep fried and served with cocktail sauce ($13.95) – or, from the raw bar, fresh select gulf oysters served steamed or chilled with cocktail sauce and lemon wedges (half-dozen $3.50; dozen $6.95). We can assure you that the oysters were among the largest and most succulent he has ever tried! The Speckled Trout is open daily for breakfast and lunch from 9 am to 3 pm and for dinner from 5 to 9 pm.

Valle Crucis

The **Mast Farm Inn**, ☎ 828-963-5857, 888-963-5857, fax 963-6404, e-mail stay@mastfarminn.com, 2543 Broadstone Road, Valle Crucis, described earlier in the chapter, more than deserves inclusion as a restaurant in its own right. Some of the rooms on the ground floor of the house have been converted into small, charming, dining rooms, where you can revel in the delights of the inn's innovative "New Appalachian" cuisine. You may begin with a salad, small or large, such as Blind Joe's House Salad, with sweet basil vinaigrette, tart sliced apples, seasoned toasted pecan halves, fresh goat cheese crumble and mixed greens ($5.50 or $8.95). And, of the tempting appetizers look for sautéed shrimp accompanied by Cajun pan-fried tomatoes, with white corn relish and horseradish mustard sauce ($7.25); hickory-smoked trout filet, served warm, accompanied by Southern vegetable condiments ($8.95); or crabmeat rice croquettes, served with sea vegetable salsa and creamy roasted garlic sauce ($7.95). The entrées, which are equally wide ranging, include grilled New Zealand lamb loin, sliced and accompanied by sweet potato-walnut ravioli and warm curry salsa with wilted fresh greens ($24.95) and seared lemon-thyme tofu triangles and pecan basmati rice, with garlic, red peppers, field peas, finished with pumpkin seeds, flaxseed oil and fresh sprouts ($13.25).

Don't expect a wine list, beer or a mixed drink at the Mast Farm Inn, because this county is dry. While you can bring whatever drinks you might fancy with you – we would suggest these dishes deserve a fine vintage or two – don't be surprised when you get the bill to find that a $5-per-bottle corkage fee has been added.

The restaurant's summer and fall (May to October) dining schedule is Monday through Saturday night, with Sunday brunch being served from 11:30 am to 2 pm.

Shops, Spas, etc.

An institution in this part of the world is the **Mast General Store**, ☎ 828-963-6511. The original store, built in 1882 by Henry Taylor and now on the National Register of Historic Places, was opened in 1883 on the Mission Crossing Scenic Byway, Highway 194, in Valle Crucis. Taylor sold the property around the turn of the century to W.W. Mast and, for the next 70 years it was owned and operated by his family, who sold everything you could possibly need. These days, with the post office in one corner, and a potbelly stove in another, it is one of the best remaining examples of an old general store. Here you will find an array of unique and interesting merchandise, and maybe even a bargain or two, to take home as a souvenir. Just behind the main store is **The School House**, dating from around 1907, which now houses a gift shop filled with Appalachian crafts, books and music. It doubles as a museum that relates, through pictures and interactive displays, the area's rich history. Not far away, in fact less than a quarter-mile, is **The Annexe**, built in 1909 and now selling the Mast Store's blend of casual clothing and outdoor gear and apparel for all mountain seasons. The School House and the Annexe share a telephone number with the main store. Other stores, in similarly old-fashioned buildings and recreating the same ambiance, are now found in Asheville, Boone, Hendersonville and Waynesville. The original store hours here are Monday through Saturday from 7 am to 6:30 pm and Sunday 1 to 6 pm. Affiliated stores, should you be visiting those towns, open their doors Monday to Saturday from 10 am to 6 pm and on Sunday from 1 to 6 pm, although winter hours may vary.

When traveling in Switzerland, Kathy came to appreciate a European bedtime tradition – the down comforter. Richard Schaffer had a similar experience. "I realized that this comforter and cover would be like a blanket, bedspread and top sheet all rolled into one. It didn't just drape over me – I wrapped up in it, and it was like heaven." Schaffer also became fascinated with the idea (rather commonplace in Europe) that

one could choose the fabrics and down fill and have a comforter made to particular specifications. When he returned home, he began a back-porch hobby with his current partner Marsha Turner. They imported down-proof textiles and down fills from around the world. Then they designed, she sewed and he stuffed. Today, what began as a mountain craft business has blossomed to become the premier manufacturer of America's finest quality down comforters and pillows. **DeWoolfson Down** products are found in the finest stores in the country, from New England to Hawaii. And lucky visitors to the mountains of Boone, NC can visit the factory at 9452 Highway 105, Banner Elk, NC 28604 ☎ 828-963-4144, 800-833-3696, or www.dewoolfsondown.com (where shoppers can actually watch the products being produced and, perhaps, have a chat with Richard Schaffer himself). In fact, there are now three DeWoolfson stores – the main store/factory in Boone, one at 304 Sunset Drive in Blowing Rock, NC, and one at Sheridan Park, Highway 278, 17A Sherington Drive in Bluffton, SC (on the approach road to Hilton Head Island). Each is as quaint and unique as their counterparts in Europe. Both comforters and pillows are made to the customer's specifications as to fabric, fill and firmness, with expert advice from the staff as to the style and fill best suited to your home climate. Even if you want something special, often a seamstress can fill your order while you wait. When your comforter and/or pillows are completed, take them home for a trial run. If a comforter needs alterations as to weight or warmth, or if a pillow is too firm or too soft, the folks at Dewoolfson Down will adjust it for you, ounce by ounce, until it is just right. They also offer America's largest selection of duvet covers and fine linens, imported from around the world.

Kathy's Suggestion: Don't wait for a visit. Order a catalog from DeWoolfson Down International, Inc., PO Drawer 472 DTS, Boone, NC 28607, ☎ 828-963-4144, wwwdewoolfsondown.com. You may never sleep the same again.

Hillsborough

Surprisingly, Hillsborough, a charming and historic small town, is not well known and is easily overlooked by travelers to this area of the central Piedmont. In fact, we nearly overlooked it ourselves. But our curiosity took over one day as we neared Exit 164 while traveling Interstate 85 enroute to Charlotte.

History

Five minor Indian tribes had inhabited this region before the arrival of the white man. Their influence is evident today in the names given such places as the Eno River, Occoneechee Mountains and Saxapahaw. The surrounding County of Orange was founded in 1752 and the town itself was established two years later where the Great Indian Trading Path crossed the Eno River. It was laid out by William Churton over 400 acres of land, a grant from John Carteret, Earl of Granville, for whom Churton worked as surveyor and agent. As an early example of town planning, Churton allowed for a spacious public square at every intersection. Sadly, this ideal was abandoned by 1766, and the now familiar grid street plan was applied to the hilly, undulating, topography.

The town had some trouble, though, establishing an identity for itself. Initially known as Orange, it subsequently was called Corbin, after Francis Corbin, an agent of the Earl of Granville; then Childsburg, from another of Granville's agents; and, finally, in 1766, it became Hillsborough, the name of the Irish peer, Wills Hill, Earl of Hillsborough and a Secretary of State for the Colonies under George III. Later still, the name evolved into Hillsboro, until, by special Act of the General Assembly of North Carolina in 1965, the original spelling, Hillsborough, was reinstated.

Hillsborough, as the capital of Orange County, was a hotbed of political activity during the Colonial and Revolutionary eras. It was home to several royal and elected governors as well as to

William Hooper, a signatory to the Declaration of Independence, whose house stands here still today. As you might imagine then, momentous and dramatic events were not uncommon. The War of Regulation – between the eastern dominated, and often corrupt, government and the western insurgents – ended with victory for Governor William Tryon in 1771 and resulted in the hanging of six Regulators. The first of seven great Revolutionary period conventions, the Third Provincial Congress of 1775, was followed by the five General Assemblies of 1778, 1780, 1782, 1783 and 1784. The state's Constitutional Convention of 1788 demanded that a Bill of Rights be added to the US Constitution. Cornwallis camped here for five days in 1781. In front of the Courthouse on George Washington's birthday, February 22, he raised the Royal Standard. Governor Thomas Burke was captured in the town on September 12 of the same year. Periodic attempts to make Hillsborough the permanent capital of the state continued until an alternate site was chosen in Wake County in 1791. In the next century, it was in Hillsborough that General Joseph E. Johnston surrendered the largest of the Confederate armies to General Sherman.

Not surprisingly, many important people of those days were drawn to and resided in Hillsborough. The homes left by them to posterity, and those of the wealthy planters from Cape Fear who made this town their favorite summer resort, are an attraction in their own right.

While many of the landmarks of those times have disappeared, more than 100 late 18th- and early 19th-century buildings listed in the National Register of Historic Places remain in and around Hillsborough .

These days, Hillsborough is a thriving small town with an absolutely delightful ambiance. Those in search of a spot for a quiet and relaxing romantic weekend will find respite here. And Hillsborough has one other crucial ingredient for such a weekend – The Hillsborough House Inn, one of the most romantic we have discovered.

Things to Do

What is there to do in Hillsborough? The short answer is not too much, and that is precisely what makes it a delightful romantic weekend destination. You will feel no pressure to rush around and see the sights – just because you are there and they are there. This is a place to relax and take things at your own pace.

But few visitors will want to leave without investigating Hillsborough's illustrious history. We suggest you begin with a stop by the **Visitors Center**, ☎ 919-732-7741, fax 919-732-6322, www.citysearch.com, at 150 E. King Street. Again, no need to rush. The hours are quite accommodating to romantic weekenders: Monday-Saturday 10 am to 4 pm and Sunday 1 to 6 pm.

The building that houses the Visitors Center, the Alexander Dickson House, is worth a visit in and of itself. Sometimes called "the last headquarters of the Confederacy," it served as the base for Confederate General Wade Hampton in the dying days of the Civil War. Indeed, it was from these headquarters on April 17, 1865 that General Johnston set out to meet General Sherman for discussions on a possible armistice. The following day, after conferring with other Confederate leaders, Johnston returned to Sherman and surrendered the largest of the Confederate armies – larger even than Lee's contingent at Appomattox – to the Union forces. But these events did not happen at this site. The house originally stood at what is now the intersection of Interstate 85 and Highway 86. It was through the efforts of the Preservation Fund of Hillsborough, who purchased and moved it 1¼ miles to the center of Hillsborough, that this remarkably intact late 18th-century farmhouse escaped destruction.

You will find an abundance of information about Hillsborough in this office. Numerous brochures, flyers and maps are available that chronicle the town's history, locating and describing the important houses. Be aware, though, that many of these are open by appointment only. Look for the *Welcome to Historic Hillsborough* brochure, which gives you a pocket history of the

most important places in and around town. Armed with this, most visitors will be content to design their own tour, walking hand-in-hand around town and relishing the atmosphere.

Along the way you are sure to notice the **Old Orange County Courthouse** at the corner of E. King and Churton Streets, a Greek Revival structure built between 1844 and 1845. Though cited as a Historic American Building, the upstairs courtroom is being used once again by the court system. Raise your sights to the octagonal cupola, where you will see one of the most famous clocks in North Carolina. Originating from Birmingham, England, tradition says the timepiece was a royal gift to Hillsborough around 1769. Originally installed in the first St. Matthew's Church of England and, afterward, in the tower of the Market House, it was moved to its present home in 1846.

More insight into the history of both the town and the region may be gleaned from the **Orange County Historical Museum**, ☎ 919-732-2201, at 201 N. Churton Street. Visit any afternoon, except Monday, between the hours of 1:30 and 4:30 pm.

The **Town Hall**, at 101 E. Orange Street and considered by some one of the most unusual in America, is found within the **Ruffin-Roulhac House**, which dates from 1821. Unfortunately, unless your romantic weekend coincides with the tour schedule – during normal business days – you will have to admire it from the exterior only.

Just outside the center of town, at 376 St. Mary's Road, is **Ayr Mount**, ☎ 919-732-6886. Built in 1815 by William Kirkland, a Scottish immigrant merchant who made his fortune here, this is counted among North Carolina's finest Federal period plantation houses. As an extra bonus, a collection of period pieces, accumulated by Richard H. Jenrette, are on display in the house. Tours are conducted at 2 pm on Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday from March to November.

If you want a more thorough, and professional, explanation of the town's many interesting sites, contact **Colonial Guides of Hillsborough**, ☎ 919-732-0858 or 800-437-4989, at 125 East King Street. They offer a variety of walking tours of historic

Hillsborough, during which guides will regale you with intriguing stories of the War of Regulation and the Revolution.

If you plan carefully, your romantic escapade in Hillsborough can coincide with one of three special event weekends. The **Spring Home and Garden Tour**, is a biennial occasion that gives an opportunity to peek behind the façades of some of the town's most historic homes and beyond the walls of their spectacular gardens. The **Christmas Candlelight Tour**, on the first Sunday in December, also is a public tour of some of these homes, bedecked in their full holiday regalia. On the third Saturday in June, however, there is a treat of an entirely different sort. **Hillsborough Hog Day** features a barbecue cook-off, crafts sales and live musical entertainment. It even features a competition for the best-dressed pig!

Sweet Dreams

Numerous inns and bed and breakfasts are described both in this guide and in its companion, *Romantic Weekends: Virginia, Maryland & Washington DC*. But we found very few as delightful as the **Hillsborough House Inn**, ☎ 919-644-1600, 800-616-1660, fax 644-1308, www.citysearch.com/rdu/hillsboroughinn. Located at 209 East Tyron Street, on seven acres in Hillsborough's Historic District, the grounds overlook St. Mary's Road – an ancient Indian trading path that ran from Virginia to South Carolina. Though construction of the home was begun as early as the 1790s, its size was more than doubled by Thomas Blount Hill of Halifax, who purchased the property in 1853. His daughter, Alice, married a local fellow, Joseph Cheshire Webb, and descendants of the Hills and the Webbs lived in the home until 1997. In fact, you will find that the churchyard of St. Matthew's Episcopal Church traces the history of those two families. Until 1989, the structure remained a private residence. At that time, it was totally restored and lovingly converted into the bed & breakfast inn you see today.

At first sight the inn's exterior is both impressive and attractive. Rocking chairs beckon with promises of relaxation from the 80-foot-long front porch. Even more enticing is the hammock lazing in the yard and the enticing pool between the Main House and the Kitchen House. Inside, there is a library with fireplace, a den furnished with TV-VCR, movies, and guest telephone, and a kitchenette with complimentary beverages and snacks. Hillsborough House also serves as an art gallery. The exhibits, which are rotated out monthly, consist of works by local artists.

The difficult decision is which of the guest rooms to request. The choice is beguiling. Kate's Room, circa 1940, with its separate entrance opening onto the porch, rents for $95 a night. It has a king-sized bed set upon a unique hand-painted floor, a lovely view of the woods and a full private bath.

The following trio of rooms, each on the second floor, rent for $110 per night. Elizabeth's Room, circa 1853, has views of the surrounding woods through large old-glass double windows and a private half-bath with shower, toilet and washbasin. Its very romantic queen-sized bed, adorned in blue and white and draped in white voile, is fit for a princess – and her Prince Charming. A fireplace completes the ambiance. Annie's Room, also circa 1853, is decorated in a soothing soft teal color scheme and features a draped four-poster queen-sized bed, hand-painted floor, fireplace and full private bath. Joe's Room, dating from around 1800, has what is best described as a cozy décor with hand-painted floor, king-sized bed and full private bath. It offers access to a breezy porch overlooking the pool.

Guys, for a bit more, $125 a night, you can romance your fair lady in Miss Eliza's Room, on the second floor and in the original 1790s portion of the house. Beneath its 10-foot ceiling is a queen-sized bed, gracefully draped with white voile, which descends like a cloud from the ceiling. It also has a hand-painted wooden floor, fireplace, full private bath, and access to a porch overlooking the pool.

The pièce de résistance, and most definitely our recommendation, is The Kitchen House. Occupying two floors of a 1790s outbuilding, considered to be the oldest brick dependency still standing in Hillsborough, is an incredibly romantic three-room suite. The queen-sized bed is bowered in white poplar branches; the upstairs sitting room has a television – though we are sure you won't need one; and the bathroom has a Jacuzzi with shower and a hand-painted floor. There is no end to what your romantic imaginations can cook up in this setting. And, at $200 a night, the check won't break the bank.

Breakfast, designed so that you can be as good or as bad as you want to be, is served at 9 am – unless you and the innkeeper agree otherwise. The buffet includes gourmet coffees and a choice from an array of tempting home-baked goods, fresh fruits and juices, cereals and cheeses.

To us the real amazement was finding this sophisticated romantic ambiance in a traditional town like Hillsborough. There is an explanation, but we won't spoil the surprise by telling you here. You can discover the secret for yourselves.

The **Colonial Inn**, ☎ 919-732-2461, at 153 West King Street, in an eminently historic building, is an interesting option for a romantic weekend base. It is believed that the oldest segment of this structure dates from 1759. It replaced a previous tavern constructed upon the site seven years earlier, which succumbed to fire in 1758. The Colonial Inn, then, is one of the 10 oldest inns in the United States and, just possibly, the one in longest continuous operation. Reputedly, it has played host to such prominent personalities as Cornwallis, Aaron Burr and First Lady Dolly Madison. There is also a fascinating story, the details of which the proprietors are delighted to share, of how the inn was saved from pillage and destruction during the Civil War by the then innkeeper's Masonic connections.

The inn has been greatly expanded, but restored to its Revolutionary prominence. Guests can choose from eight rooms, some with private bath and some with shared bath, for between $55 and $65 per night. Rates include a full Southern-style breakfast. In the restaurant, which serves traditional American

dishes, you can actually dine in the same corner frequented by Lord Cornwallis during his stay at the Inn.

Tables for Two

The **Saratoga Grill**, ☎ 919-732-2214, above a small antique mall at 108 S. Churton Street, is, without doubt, the restaurant of choice in Hillsborough. Owned and operated by Kevin and Colleen St. John, this charming and delightful restaurant derives its name from Kevin's hometown of Saratoga, New York. Kevin, in his role as chef, enjoys cooking over an open fire. By mixing charcoal with various woods – mostly mesquite, but also some hickory and apple – he adds subtle but distinctive flavor to his dishes. The specialty here is fish, with unusual varieties offered, including swordfish ($15.95), salmon ($14.95) and bluefish ($10.95). Landlubbers, never fear! There is also a limited selection of meat dishes and pastas. If you find yourself nearby at lunchtime, check out Saratoga Grill's enticing array of deli and grilled sandwiches and burgers.

In the next block up the road, at 111 N. Churton Street, you will find the rather unusual **LU-E-G's Sandwich Shop**, ☎ 919-732-5453. In its past life, this was The James Pharmacy, and that is the source of much of its charm. The Pharmacy interior, insofar as possible, has been left undisturbed, lending to its new tenant a unique ambiance. Known for its specialty sandwiches, this is a really neat place to pause for a midday snack.

Shops, Spas, etc.

Hillsborough is small and, thus, not many choices are available here. There is, however, one store you will want to investigate: **Country Village Florist & Gifts**, ☎ 919-732-0880, 800-573-6031, fax 732-7248 and www.citysearch.com/rdu/countryvillage, at 200 N. Churton Street. This used to be a gas station. While service is still the order of the day, these innovatively redesigned and spacious quarters now display a kaleidoscopic array of flowers and attractive gift items. This is

the place to come to for whatever blossom speaks your partner's language of love. You will likely want to get something tangible, perhaps for your home, to remember your weekend by as well. The choices are many: ornamental plates and vases, chimes, clocks, brass pots, mugs and cups, Russian dolls, teddy bears and other stuffed animals, scented candles and a large selection of romantic cards. Venturing outside into the small garden, you will find bird feeders and butterfly houses, created and handmade by William, co-owner with his life and business partner, Pat. There are also bird baths, whirligigs, and angel statuary, rabbits, and garden benches of poured cement. Advance orders for flowers or other merchandise are gladly accepted. In fact, with some advance notice and a little direction, Pam will arrange a made-to-order gift basket.

Norman's Suggestion: Guys, if your loved one is into angels – Kathy certainly is – she'll think this place is heavenly. Winged messengers reside here in all materials, colors, shapes and sizes.

Lake Lure

In western North Carolina, less than a half-hour southeast of Asheville, is a place that can lure visitors by its sheer beauty. Perhaps that is how Lake Lure came by its name. The scene, encircled by 500-million-year-old mountains, is breathtaking. In fact *National Geographic* magazine selected it as one of the "10 most spectacular man-made lakes in the world." We are sure you will agree that, despite its diminutive size, with just 27 miles of shoreline, Lake Lure is an ideal destination for romantic weekenders.

And nearby **Hickory Nut Gorge**, extending for 14 miles, has often been called the most beautiful natural canyon in the Eastern United States. Its steep granite cliffs were carved from the Blue Ridge Mountains by the Rocky Broad River, which flows rapidly through it still today.

To both of these add the natural geological phenomenon, Chimney Rock. From its summit the vista of the lake below and the tree-bedecked mountains stretching in all directions to the horizon is majestic to behold.

Given its many attractions and the presence of a delightful inn here, we found it surprising that Lake Lure has not suffered a colossal influx of tourists. But this has its advantages. After all who wants to share their romantic weekend with hordes of tourists?

Things to Do

While there are only two main attractions at Lake Lure, Chimney Rock and the lake itself, they are both, for their own unique reasons, highly recommended. First, let's explore **Chimney Rock**.

Lucius B. Morse was born in 1871, grew up in Missouri, and graduated from medical school. He subsequently established his medical practice as a physician, only to learn that he himself was ill. The diagnosis was tuberculosis. Having some knowledge of the thermal belt of western North Carolina and its wholesome environment, he traveled east to investigate the area. So intrigued was he on his wanderings through the Hickory Nut Gorge, that he paid a local man the princely sum of 25¢ to take him, by donkey, to the top of Chimney Rock. As he surveyed the vista spread below him, a vision was born – a vision of what would become Chimney Rock Park, Lake Lure and the town of the same name. Morse committed then and there to dedicate the remainder his life to that goal.

At that time Chimney Rock and the 400 surrounding acres were owned by Jerome B. Freeman, who had purchased it for just $25 sometime around 1870. It was he who erected a stairway to the top and first opened it to the public in 1885. Mr. Morse, however, had grander ideas. In 1902, having persuaded his twin brothers, Asahel of Kansas City and Hiriam B. of St. Louis, to back him financially, he purchased 64 acres of Chimney Rock Mountain – including the Chimney and cliffs – for

$5,000. Over the ensuing years, many small adjacent tracts were purchased and, today, the property makes up nearly 1,000 acres. By July 4, 1916 a bridge spanned the river and a three-mile dirt road led up to the base of Chimney Rock. Unfortunately, when Hurricane Hilda blew through the area later that same year, she brought with her devastating floods that swept away this and most other bridges in North Carolina. It was soon rebuilt, however, and a two-lane paved road was added as well. Still, from the end of that road, tourists faced an arduous 400-step climb to the Chimney's summit. In 1948, progress and vision marched on, putting the Chimney's glorious views within the reach of most visitors. A 258-foot vertical shaft elevator was built that reaches the top in just 42 seconds. Upon exiting, a walkway leads to the isolation of the Chimney Rock summit proper. With nothing but frail railings separating you from a 1,200-foot vertical drop, it is not a comfortable place for those who suffer from vertigo. Be brave, though, as the panoramic views are spectacular – on a clear day reaching as far as Kings Mountain, 75 miles away to the east. The more energetic, of course, still have the option of climbing to the summit. Most, however, will be content to get their exercise by way of the gentle pathway back down.

In the spring of 1963 a trail was forged to the base of the dramatic **Hickory Nut Falls**. With a drop of 404 feet, this is one of the highest falls in the Eastern United States. Until 1977, when the practice was discontinued due to liability problems, Hickory Nut Falls was accessible, via the trail, by jeep. Presently, it entails a fairly strenuous hike. But if you are fit enough to put the Falls on your itinerary, keep in mind that all trails to the waterfall are closed, for safety reasons, between mid-November and mid-April.

Chimney Rock Park, ☎ 828-625-961, 800-277-9611, www.chimneyrockpark.com, is open daily year-round, weather permitting, with the exception of Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. The Ticket Plaza is open from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm, with the closing time extended for one hour during Daylight Savings Time. The Park grounds remain open for an hour to an hour-and-a-half after the Ticket Plaza closes.

Throughout the year Chimney Rock Park plays host to events such as an Easter Sunrise service, demonstrations of rope and rock climbing and guided bird and wildflower identification walks.

A very romantic place to visit and an ideal place to relax and enjoy the charms of Mother Nature is found within Hickory Nut Gorge – just 300 yards south of US 74 and very near to Chimney Rock Park. The **Bottomless Pools and Waterfalls**, opened in 1916 by Dr. Lucius Morse, and owned and operated by the Lee Powers Family since 1938, are a product of thousands of years of cutting and grading by Pool Creek in a mad dash from its source high in the mountains to Lake Lure. Where weaknesses in the hard resistant granite of the stream bed deflected the rushing water from its downward path, a whirlpool was formed. Within the whirlpool, stones and pebbles, propelled by the swirling current, carved circular walls ever deeper into the rock below, creating three separate and unique pools, each with its own beautiful waterfall. Although scientists cannot pinpoint the age of the pools, it is estimated that they are at least 25,000 years young and perhaps 100,000 years old. You can enjoy this handiwork of nature while strolling through the lush virgin forest, accented by rhododendron, laurel, evergreens, and carpets of wildflowers. A word of caution, however. The creek bed is quite slippery and visitors, in the interest of safety, are strongly encouraged to stay on the trails. For more information, write PO Box 5, Lake Lure, NC 28746.

Turn your attentions now to **Lake Lure** itself. Like Chimney Rock Park, it was the brainchild of Dr. Lucius B. Morse. In fact, the good doctor had very practical reasons for building the dam between 1925 and 1927. In his vision, he saw not only a lovely lake, but also the electricity generated by a hydroelectric plant that would power the various projects he envisioned for the area. These days, the town of Lake Lure sells the power to the Duke Power company.

The people best placed to assist you in exploring the lake work for **Lake Lure Tours**, PO Box 541, Lake Lure, NC 27846, ☎ 828-625-0077, fax 828-625-8081, www.lakelure.com/ma-

rina/marina.html. Their office is at the Lake Lure Marina, on Highway 64/74-A in the town of Lake Lure. Lake Lure Tours is open year-round; from March through October, weather permitting, they operate seven days a week. From 10 am to 8 pm, hour-long tours are offered at $9 per person, departing on the hour and half-hour. They provide interesting facts about the lake and its history, including the legend of the church said to be 100 feet beneath the surface of the lake. You will also learn that the lake has been a popular location shoot for filmmakers – appearing in *Dirty Dancing, The Last of the Mohicans* and *A Breed Apart*. Many species of wildlife make the lake their habitat, and you will likely see young deer drinking from the lake or perhaps, if you are fortunate, a rare blue heron. Then there is the absolutely stunning scenery. The Twilight Cruise is a one-hour, narrated tour in the crisp mountain air beneath the colorful brush strokes of the setting sun. These cruises operate between the hours of 6 pm and 9 pm, seven days a week, at a cost of $9 per person.

But the most appealing trip for romantic weekenders is the Sunset Dinner Cruise. Departing around dusk – the actual time varies according to the season – your boat will cruise for 30 to 45 minutes to Sunset Cove, where you will marvel at one of the most glorious sunsets you are ever likely to see. Your captain will then set a course across the lake and dock at a lakeside restaurant, perhaps the Point of View (described below), where you can dine at your leisure. After dinner, return to your waiting craft. Warmly wrapped in blankets supplied by the crew and serenaded by soft music, you will glide back beneath a canopy of stars to the marina. The cost is $15 per person, excluding the dinner; cash, checks and credit cards are accepted and reservations are required. Be advised that all trips depart "weather permitting."

Our Suggestion: Take along a picnic basket of appetizers for before dinner and a bottle of chilled champagne or your favorite wine (with a pair of glasses) to toast your love on the return voyage.

Equipped with some knowledge of the lake gleaned from the guided tour, you may want to venture out as master of a vessel yourself. If so, call **Dam Marina**, ☎ 828-625-0550, located just off Highway 9, to rent a boat by the hour. According to your purposes and your mood, you can choose either a 28-foot pontoon boat, a 15-foot runabout jonboat or, for the more energetic, a canoe. We suggest that you call ahead for exact rates – and be sure to inquire about any special promotions or seasonal discounts.

We hear that the fishing is fine on Lake Lure. We aren't able to verify that by personal experience – Kathy doesn't fish, and few, if any, readers will be as unsuccessful as Norman is in this sport. He has never caught a fish in his life, and that is not for lack of trying. But never fear. Professional assistance is a mere phone call and a swallow of pride away. We recommend the **Mountain View Guide Service**, 128 Vine Street, Forest City, NC 28043, ☎ 828-245-1532, operated by David Pye. Daily trips are individually designed for everyone from beginners to experienced anglers. You will be fishing for largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, trout, crappie and catfish, at $100 per person for a half-day and $150 per person for a full day. Alternatively, a day of fly-fishing for trout on the Davidson River is priced at $200 for the first person and $50 for each additional person. All rates include tackle and bait. And, if you get fed up with the surf, you can try your hand on the turf with guided deer and quail hunting at $200 per person.

For more information about this area, maybe in advance of your visit, contact the **Hickory Nut Gorge Chamber of Commerce**, ☎ 828-625-2725, Chimney Rock. If you have access to the web, surf on over to www.lakelure.com.

Sweet Dreams

The **Lodge on Lake Lure**, ☎ 828-625-2789, 800-733-2785, fax 625-2412, on Charlotte Drive, with its spectacular location, is among our favorite places. It sits high upon a bluff with a sweeping view of the lake and gardens that lead to its shore.

Surprisingly, this is Lake Lure's only lakeside inn. Adding to its charm, your hosts, Jack and Robin Stanier, have crafted a warm and inviting ambiance. The tone is set as you enter through the Great Room. Vaulted ceilings, rough hand-hewn beams, walls of wormy chestnut and a 20-foot stone fireplace embedded with a gargantuan gristmill stone are complemented by comfortable furniture and a proliferation of plants and fresh flowers. Also on the main floor you will find a reading room, which has a fireplace and is stocked with books, games, TV and video player. French doors lead to the breakfast room, which boasts lovely views of the lake and doubles as a sun porch. Down the stairs, rocking chairs beckon from a graciously Southern lake-view veranda, from which a terraced walkway leads gently down the hillside to the boathouse. If you opt for a stroll, however, expect company from one or both of the resident Labrador dogs. At the end of the path, a pontoon boat awaits its ritual afternoon cruise on the lake – weather permitting of course. In the summer months, you may take a swim or catch some rays on the rooftop deck.

Each of the 12 charming guest rooms is uniquely decorated "mountain style" and furnished with comfort in mind. We particularly recommend either the Veranda Room or the Cove Room, both with a large soaking tub and fireplace, if romance is on your mind. Prices range from $99 to $149 a night, excluding tax but including a hearty mountain gourmet breakfast and an afternoon happy hour with complimentary wine and crackers. When making your plans be advised that there is a two-night minimum stay on weekends.

The **Gästehaus Salzburg**, ☎ 828-625-0093 or fax 625-0091, at 1491 Memorial Highway (64/74), is certainly the place to be if you want to experience old-world charm in the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains. Located on a private, heavily wooded and rolling hillside with many native flowering trees and plants, the inn offers sanctuary and inner peace. To preserve this environment, TVs and loud music are not allowed in the rooms. But who would swap those for the pleasures of being serenaded to sleep and awakened in the morning by a chorus of birdsong?

Romantic weekenders will be enticed by one of the two two-room suites with Jacuzzi tubs, which rent for $145 per night in the summer and slightly less in the winter months, but the queen-sized room with balcony shouldn't be overlooked. The latter go for $79 in summer (less in winter). The evening social hour provides a chance for relaxation and conversation – sip on a glass of wine to the strains of Alpine music. Upon awaking, enjoy a traditional European-style breakfast. Don't forget to ask innkeepers Werner and Patricia Maringer about their range of special packages.

Tables for Two

The restaurant selection in Lake Lure is not among its stronger attractions. The **Point of View Restaurant**, best enjoyed in combination with Lake Lure Tours' Sunset Cruise, is the most enticing option. The food is tasty – prepared from fresh, high-quality ingredients; the wine list is a bit limited, but does contain Kathy's favorite (Chateauneuf du Pape), and the wait staff is friendly and efficient. Prep table to dinner table time may be a bit prolonged, but thankfully so, as each entrée is prepared in-house from scratch. "Previews" such as escargot and crab stuffed mushrooms are in the $5.25-$6.25 range and "Interviews," aka soups and salads, are reasonably priced between $2.75 and $4. Main dishes, presented as "Viewpoints I through V," encompass fowl, veal, seafood, beef, lamb and vegetarian entrées and are served with house salad, vegetable, starch and fresh-baked bread. Prices for entrées range from $11.95 to $17.95 and include chicken breasts sautéed with thyme, rosemary and mushrooms, finished with a light champagne sauce ($13.95); large shrimp, sea scallops and sautéed mushrooms floating in a rich mornay sauce served over a lightly seasoned bed of pasta ($14.95); and the house specialty, rack of lamb, lightly seasoned and coated with Dijon mustard and fine cracker meal, then baked (market price). The Point of View is on US 64/74 in Lake Lure and reservations can be made at ☎ 828-625-4380.

If you want to explore other alternatives, we suggest you ask your hosts for their preferences.

Shops, Spas, etc.

You will need to use your imagination here – as we did.

Lake Norman

It is a fair assumption that most people reading this guide will have little idea where Lake Norman is. We didn't know either until we began our research. As recently as 20 years ago, the area was considered a backwater by citizens of Charlotte, just 20 miles or so to the south.

The source for the lake, and for 10 others, is the Catawba River, whose name derives from the Catawba Indians, translated as "People of the River." The River begins its life close to Mount Mitchell, the highest peak east of the Mississippi River, and flows for 224 miles through the more populated areas of North and South Carolina. It becomes the Wateree, then the Santee and, finally, the Cooper River, adding another 200-plus miles to its journey before entering the Atlantic Ocean near Charleston. Between the uppermost lake, James, and Lake Wateree, the last lake actually situated on the Catawba River, the water elevation drops a significant 1,050 feet. Lake Norman, the fifth in line and the largest manmade lake in North Carolina, dates from 1963, when construction of the Cowans Ford Dam created this, . So large is it, in fact, that the 32,510-acre surface area is nearly equal to the surface area of the other 10 lakes combined. It has a shoreline of 520 miles – greater than that of the Outer Banks – and a water retention span of 207 days!

The water passing through the dam is harnessed by the Duke Power Cowans Ford Hydroelectric Station, completed in 1967, which has four generating units capable of producing a total of 372,000 kilowatts of electricity. Duke Power has two other plants on Lake Norman. The Marshall Steam Station, Duke's

second largest coal-burning plant and ranked one of the most efficient of its type in the country, is capable of producing two million kilowatts of electricity. The company's newest addition, the McGuire Nuclear Station, can generate 2,258,000 kilowatts of electricity. These stations are named after former Duke presidents, as is Lake Norman itself. Duke, though, is concerned with more than the production of power. The company spends considerable time, money and energy on the development and maintenance of Lake Norman as a recreational asset. Besides donating more than 1,300 acres for the establishment of the Duke Power State Park, it has constructed free public access areas around the lake. It also offers free tours of the Energy Explorium at the nuclear station. At the Environmental Center, Duke Power scientists, engineers and technicians continually collect and study long-term data with the aim of protecting the lake's resources.

Barely two decades ago, few considered Lake Norman a place to live. How times change! These days, it is one of the fastest-growing areas in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg region. New home communities, including exclusive golf course developments, are rising everywhere. And, the lake has attracted the attention of many NASCAR racing drivers, who make their homes there and have established shops in the surrounding districts. This combination, in turn, has led to the physical and cultural expansion of the nearby towns. Indeed, in the 18 months that elapsed between our first and final research trips, we noted many positive changes. Not coincidentally, these towns are on the eastern side of Lake Norman, and within a very short distance of Interstate 77 and its fast access to Charlotte.

Mooresville

The northernmost of the towns is Mooresville, actually in Iredell County. Because of its close proximity to the lake it is nicknamed the "Port City." Among its attractions is the red-brick denim mill on South Main Street, a host of specialty stores and, for those interested, the **North Carolina Auto Racing Hall of Fame**.

Davidson

Some distance south, just off Exit 30 of Interstate 77, is the charming Davidson, founded in 1837 by a group of Scotch-Irish Presbyterians. The northernmost town in Mecklenburg County and a quintessential college town, Davidson boasts a picturesque Main Street lined with shops and restaurants. Of interest also are the numerous homes from the 19th and early 20th century, described in the *Historic Downtown Davidson* brochure.

Both the town and the college, the latter a Presbyterian-affiliated institution on a 450-acre campus, are named in honor of General William Lee Davidson. This Revolutionary War hero was killed by British troops on February 1, 1781, on a site (now under water) upon the bank of the Catawba River at Cowans Ford.

If you are planning a trip to this area in the first week of December, you will be privileged to enjoy Christmas in Davidson. The Yuletide season is a magical time here; the decorations are lovely and stores stay open late into the evening when the sidewalks are a hive of activity. People shop or browse to the strains of holiday music, indulge in a romantic horse-drawn carriage ride, or take advantage of a host of other special events.

Cornelius

Cornelius, the next town south, is the thriving hub of the region. Now extending as far westward as the shores of Lake Norman, it is home to numerous shopping areas, hotels, restaurants and a recently opened microbrewery.

Huntersville

Huntersville, the southernmost of the lake towns, and just north of Charlotte, will appeal to romantic weekenders because of two particularly interesting businesses in its large shopping center (described in detail on page 130).

Things to Do

Having chosen Lake Norman as your romantic destination, you will, no doubt, want to spend at least some time out on the lake itself. You will not be short of options. The most flexibility, and great fun, comes with taking to the water in command of your own vessel. Who hasn't dreamed of being a captain for at least one day? So grab your first mate and make those dreams a reality. Contact **Lake Norman Marina Boat Rentals**, ☎ 704-483-5546, fax 483-1356, e-mail lnmarina@aol.com, www.lakenormanmarina.com, to book your vessel of choice. If fishing is your main interest, rent a bass boat – popular at $89 a day or $60 a half-day. If you prefer speed to angling, your choice must surely be a ski/cruising boat, priced at $275 a day or $200 a half-day. Those who want to relax and sightsee at a more leisurely pace will opt for a slow cruising pontoon boat, costing $185 a day and $145 a half-day. A full rental day is from 8 am to 5 pm, a half-day is either from 8 am to midday or from 1 to 5 pm. A damage deposit of $300 is required, and you must be 21 or older to rent. Family-owned since its inception in 1974, Lake Norman Marina is highly respected, with the owners priding themselves on service. Upon renting a boat, you will be taken for a short introductory and instructional ride by one of their experienced staff. Your guide will demonstrate the safe operation of the vessel and point out areas of the lake suitable for waterskiing, swimming, and fishing. The marina also rents skis, tubes, life vests and ropes. Lake Norman Marina is at 3550 Highway 150 E. Denver, nine miles west of I-77, and 28 miles north of Charlotte.

Be aware, though, that dangers inherent in the lake can turn a pleasant day on the water into a disaster if you are unaware of, or fail to follow, the rules.

- ❒ You may want to carry with you the little brochure called *Aids to Navigation on Lake Norman*, sponsored by *Lake Norman Magazine*, which explains the markers.

- ❒ Pay particular attention to the power lines that cross the lake at various points. These can be extremely dangerous and, as lake levels fluctuate due to power generation and weather conditions, it is difficult to determine the precise height of clearance.
- ❒ Avoid the tailrace section directly below hydroelectric stations, which are controlled, in many instances, by microwave radio. When activated, the sudden release of water through the turbines is extremely hazardous to boaters below.
- ❒ Finally, keep a 300-foot distance from the upstream and downstream sides of the dam.

Fishing may look like an easy sport, but many have set out optimistically, only to return at the end of the day empty-handed – without even a story to tell about the one (or more) that got away. Make no mistake; there are plenty of fish out there – especially the famed striped bass (stripers), which are well stocked, annually, by the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission. Fully grown, a striper can weigh more than 45 lbs. and offer an unmatched freshwater angling experience. Without a doubt, the best chance of catching one of these monsters is an excursion with an experienced guide, who has intimate knowledge of the lake and all the right gear. We recommend, therefore, that you call **Ty Mathis Striper Fishing**, ☎ 704-483-5474, and arrange a full day or half-day of striper fishing on Lake Norman.

The sight of a sidewheel steamboat invokes romantic images of the days when these vessels transported both passengers and freight on the rivers of America. Now, thanks to the vision of two captains, Bud Lancaster and Jack Williams, you can cruise Lake Norman in such royal style on the ***Catawba Queen***. Contact Lake Cruises, Inc., ☎ 704-663-2628 or fax 664-4361, to see what's being offered during the days you'll be visiting. Usually, there will be a choice of a sightseeing cruise at $10.60 per person, a luncheon cruise at $17.15 per person, a dinner cruise at $92.56 per couple, or (our suggestion) the ultra-romantic moonlight cruise for a very reasonable $19.08 each. Prices include tax and gratuity. There is a cash bar, with full

ABC permits, on board. The *Catawba Queen* sets sail from Queens Landing, Lake Norman's only family entertainment facility, at 1459 River Highway, just 4½ miles west of Exit 36, I-77, at Mooresville.

On the subject of **Mooresville**, it is definitely one of the places you should visit when in the Lake Norman area. NASCAR lovers, in particular, will be enthralled. The town, with good reason, labels itself "Race City USA." And, if you are hankering to get behind the scenes to see what makes up a NASCAR team, tick this as the place for you.

Here in the heartland of NASCAR racing are more than 30 race shops within 30 miles of Charlotte. **Race City Tours**, ☎ 704-892-1749, fax 892-5255, e-mail tours@racecitytours.com and www.racecitytours.com, knows exactly where they are. One of their knowledgeable guides will take you on a journey through auto racing history. Or, if you prefer, you may customize a tour to include your favorite shops.

Also in Mooresville you will find the prestigious **North Carolina Auto Racing Hall of Fame**, ☎ 704-663-5331, fax 663-6949, www.ncarhof.com, at 119 Knob Hill Road, Lakeside Park. Visit Monday to Saturday from 9 am to 5 pm. You will be fascinated to find 30-plus race cars representing all types of auto racing, showcases and displays of racing memorabilia, an art gallery featuring the sport's top faces, a gift shop that carries a wide selection of racing souvenirs and the Goodyear Mini-Theater, where you can relive racing's greatest moments. For a more hands-on experience, test your driving skills in the Indy Simulator.

Mooresville is also the home of an artist of national and international repute. Although his name is not highly recognized, those who have recently visited any one of the North Carolina Welcome Centers will have seen his work. A more extensive display is at **"Cotton" Ketchie Landmark Galleries**, ☎ 704-664-4122, 800-842-8604, fax 704-664-3527, e-mail coton@landmark-galleries.com, www.landmark-galleries.com, 212 N. Main Street. In addition to the owner/artist's work, you will find all manner of arts and crafts in the lighthouse theme.

These range from the newest gift item introduced in 1998, a wooden-clock with a lighthouse print on its face, to lighthouse jigsaw puzzles. Also on sale are hand-painted and hand-carved decoys, fashioned of either wood or canvas by some of the East Coast's most skilled craftsmen; hand-crafted model boats; and antique pottery. Among the ceramic products, an attractive lotion dispenser would be an affordable and attractive addition to your kitchen or bath. It is Cotton's paintings and prints, though, that will captivate. Working in a sensitive style of realism and with a transparent wash of watercolors, he portrays each of his subjects as if suspended in time. Between $475 and $3,500 will buy you a Cotton Ketchie original. If that is just a little high, a collectible limited edition print would also be a lovely enhancement to your home. Suffice it to say, you are unlikely to leave "Cotton" Ketchie Landmark Galleries empty-handed.

More information about the Lake Norman area can be obtained in advance of your trip from the **North Mecklenburg Chamber & Visitors Center**, ☎ 704-892-1922, fax 892-5313, e-mail NmeckCofC@aol.com, www.northmeck.com. Or visit their offices at the Shops-on-the-Green, I-77, Exit 28 Torrence Chapel Road, Cornelius, NC 28031, Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm, Saturday, 10 am to 5 pm, and Sunday, midday to 5 pm. For area-specific information, grab your mouse and surf on over to www.lakenorman.org.

Sweet Dreams

Davidson

The **Davidson Village Inn**, ☎ 800-892-0796, fax 704-896-2184, e-mail info@davidsoninn.com, www.davidsoninn.com, is located in the heart of Davidson at 117 Depot Street, upon the site of the 1923 Maxwell Chambers Hotel. Fashioned in the European style, this inn prides itself upon luxurious accommodations – offering personalized service and more comfort than you would expect from a conventional hotel. The 18 rooms, including four suites, are furnished to a very high standard and,

on weekends, rent for $110 and $125, respectively. Innkeepers Rebecca and Gordon also offer a number of special packages, which may vary according to the season. Regardless of which you choose, your day will begin with a deluxe Continental breakfast, featuring all manner of succulent goodies and a choice of the morning's papers. In the evening, you will want to return to the large open lobby where, perhaps in front of a roaring fire if it's cool outside, you can enjoy afternoon tea and a book from the extensive library. For your comfort, the inn has adopted a non-smoking policy, the only exceptions being the designated smoking rooms.

Lake Norman - On The Lake

Having come this far to see the lake, why not stay on it? Splash out! Call Bobby Faulk, ☎ 704-663-2573 and arrange to stay on his **Floating Bed and Breakfast**. This is a custom 42-foot houseboat built in 1995. Heated and air-conditioned for year-round comfort, it has a full kitchen, a living room, a bedroom, and such amenities as color TV, VCR, and stereo with CD player. This is not, though, a houseboat that you can pilot yourself. For $350 Bobby will take you for a spin around the lake, park the houseboat in a secluded spot, arrange a candlelit dinner, and then depart on a smaller boat, leaving the two of you in romantic privacy. If you would prefer not to actually get far out onto the lake, but still fancy the idea of sleeping on a houseboat, rent it as a floating condo and never leave the dock. The charge for this privilege is a reasonable $100 per night.

Tables for Two

Cornelius

The **Lakeside Restaurant & Lounge**, ☎ 704-896-8985 or fax 896-8941, 20210 Henderson Road, is on the very edge of the lake at Holiday Marina. In warmer weather, sit outside on the deck built out over the lake. Other times sit indoors, where the large open-plan environment affords lovely views through huge picture windows. Whether you have come for a drink and

a snack or a full meal, you will be equally catered to here. The appetizers are varied, with the petite crab cakes ($5.95) and bacon wrapped scallops ($8.50) meriting special mention. The numerous, and delicious, entrées and house specialties ($11.95 to $15.95) each come with a recommended wine selection.

The **Lake Norman Brewing Company**, ☎ 704-892-5622 and fax 892-9174, 19707 Liverpool Parkway, is found near the junction with I-77. This restaurant, a relative newcomer to the area, opened in late 1997. Large and cavernous after the fashion of such places, the inside seating capacity is 232. An additional 44 guests can be seated on the patio. Brews vary with the season; and they usually have no more than six beers on tap at any given time. Four will be traditional brews; two will be dark, select beers. Our favorite, incidentally, at 6% with alcohol content (the highest allowed by state law), is Duke's Plutonium Ale. And, you only have one guess as to the origin of its name! On the subject of food, the menu is extensive. Expect the normal brewery fare, with catchy names: drunken shrimp ($5.95), ale battered fish & chips ($8.95) and brew house salad ($3.95) being some examples. It is open on Sunday to Tuesday from 11 am to 10 pm and Wednesday to Saturday from 11 am to 11 pm.

Olé Olé at the Lake, serves Spanish and international cuisine, ☎ 704-892-7150, fax 892-7159, e-mail oleole@unidial.com. It is at 19708 West Catawba Avenue, between the two above establishments. As it is set back a bit from the main road and to the left when driving from I-77. Pay attention or you'll miss it the first time, as we did. That would be a pity. As the name suggests, the theme here, in both décor and cuisine, is Spanish. The menu features a wide selection of tapas and traditional Spanish dishes such as paella Valenciana (by tradition, a lunchtime dish only to Spaniards) and a real favorite, zarzuela Española – a seafood stew ($15.95). The menu also includes specialties from Italy ($12.50 to $17.95), the Americas ($11.95 to $17.95) and Mexico ($7.95 to $12.95), along with a sampling of vegetarian dishes ($10.50 to $11.25). All may be accompanied by a bottle from an equally extensive selection of international wines. Add to this a Mediterranean ambiance and a classical guitarist to serenade patrons nightly. Olé Olé is open

for dinner Sunday to Thursday from 5 to 10 pm and Friday and Saturday from 5 to 11 pm. Reservations are recommended.

Davidson

Jasper's, ☎ 704-896-1881, 127 Depot Street, almost next door to the Davidson Village Inn, is convenient in more ways than one. If you don't fancy going there, then, by way of delivery service, Jasper's will come to you. The specialties here are seafood and meat dishes. Recently, the owners have developed a new and enticing menu with a decidedly international flavor. The appetizers feature Asian shrimp fritters ($6.95), Maryland crab cakes ($7.95), Georgia alligator bites ($6.95), French escargots ($7.95) and Pacific Rim crab-stuffed mushrooms ($8.95). Chicken dishes may be Spanish, French, Indian or Vietnamese ($11.95 to $13.95) and, to round out the poultry plates, you can try Scottish duck in whiskey sauce ($13.95). Beef and pork have international tastes, too. Look for Irish pork chops ($13.95), Thai pork loin ($13.95), German weiner schnitzel ($13.95), Italian veal piccata ($13.95) and, from home base, Filet mignon and ribeye steaks ($14.95 to $19.50).

The **Village Cupboard**, ☎ 704-892-5992, fax 892-8388, 101 N. Main Street, Davidson, is a charming combination of deli-café, wine shop and gourmet gift store. It is easily recognized by the larger-than-life-sized figure of Chef Bob who patiently awaits your arrival outside the front door. This statuesque gentleman was named by co-owner Katherine Montbleau in honor of her husband Robert, who is the real chef. Not only is this stop a must for those visiting Davidson, but you might visit Davidson just to go to the Village Cupboard. In the forefront is a very pleasant open café, an ideal place to sit and take in the atmosphere of this lovely small town. Those wanting to take a little something back to their room can choose from gourmet foods, fresh-baked cookies, soups, homemade fudge and really special chocolates. Don't forget to check out the relatively small, but interesting, selection of champagnes, wines and beers. Opening hours are Wednesday to Saturday, for breakfast from 9 am to 11 am, for lunch from 11 am to 3 pm and for dinner 5 to 9 pm. The Village Cupboard is closed on Sunday and Monday.

Shops, Spas, etc.

If you've ever been disappointed by the premature demise of an inferior bouquet you'll know the importance of selecting a florist who carries fresh, high quality flowers. There is no doubt where you should head in the Lake Norman area for a dozen of the finest red roses. You can contact **Mary Ellen's Flowers & Gifts** at ☎ 704-664-7080, 800 664-7008 or fax 664-3838 to arrange a delivery. This is a great idea if you want to surprise your partner. But an even greater surprise awaits when you visit the shop in Festival Shopping Center, Highway 150 at I-77, 3908 Highway 150 West in Mooresville. You will then fully appreciate the "& Gifts" in the store name. You will find the most colorful array of gifts that you are ever likely to see under one roof. The list would be too long to relate here; but, we will tempt you with a taste of what to expect. First, chocolate lovers will absolutely have to make a stop here. While recently vacationing in Switzerland, we sampled our share of that country's world famous chocolates, and among our favorites were the delicious Grand Marnier- and Cointreau-filled varieties. You can imagine our delight when we found those, and more, at Mary Ellen's. Mary Ellen's also has an impressive selection of gift baskets filled with gourmet goodies. These would make for a tasty and romantic snack in your room. The Stuffed Animal Corner is literally stuffed with all manner of whimsical creatures, just begging for a new home. Bears dominate, with the "Teddy Tompkins" series being particularly charming. Those looking to take home a souvenir of their romantic weekend have many choices.

Our Suggestions: A Lake Norman afghan is sure to bring back warm memories. Alternatively, the highly original wine rack, fashioned of wood and hand-painted to resemble a quaint vine-covered cottage, is the perfect home for those special vintages you save to toast a special occasion.

Before leaving Mooresville, take time to do some undercover work. And, it doesn't take much sleuthing to discover that **Sally's Secret Undercoverswear**, ☎ 704-662-9868 and fax 483-9932, at 135 N. Main Street, is the place to go when you want to make a fashion statement – or understatement. Proprietress, Diane Williams, has put together a Pandora's box full of delights. In addition to ladies' everyday clothing, she carries evening gowns for special occasions, attractive pajama sets with loose-fitting tops and trouser bottoms for lounging, and a selection of very pretty lingerie. Terry wraps for men and women are available in matching sets; playful camouflage patterned silk boxers for men and women ensure at least a ceasefire in the battle of the sexes; and really special romantic gift baskets, with toiletries, sponges, massage oils, soaps, scented candles and (of course) hearts, are designed to pamper.

Time now to spirit your loved one south to **Cornelius**, where you will discover our recent discovery, a wine store, newly opened to fill what was a noticeable gap in the Lake Norman market. **A Vineyard's Best**, ☎ 704-895-7858, fax 895-7848, e-mail vinbest@bellsouth.net, at the Magnolia Plaza, Suite 7, 8301 Magnolia Estates Drive, is sure to impress the most discriminating connoisseur. Bill Randol and Tonya Schuffler, partners in life as well as business, have set out to create a wine store that really sparkles. You will find no cellar-like milieu here. Rather, an open-plan design facilitates movement between the very extensive selections on display. Champagne lovers should make a beeline for the champagne corner where, without doubt, they will find a vintage bottle for their romantic celebration. But don't stop there. In another corner is an interesting collection of ports and sherries and, in a separate room, a wide selection of imported and microbrew beers. Finally, there are the wines. US, particularly California, varieties dominate, but the selection of foreign vintages is interesting. There are bottles from Australia, Chile, France, Germany, South Africa, Spain and, more unusually, Switzerland. Wine accessories are available also. We would direct your attention to the hand-painted glasses by Sue Worthington, which will make a fine souvenir of your special weekend. You may prefer to treat

yourselves to a gift basket with a bottle of champagne and two flutes. On the other hand, a box set from Nicholas Feuillatte, which includes a very attractively packaged bottle of vintage champagne and two finely cut glasses, is also a good choice.

It was the proprietor of our next establishment who put us on the trail of A Vineyard's Best. So, thank you to Wink Keziah, award-winning stylist and co-owner with his wife of **Keziah's Salon & Day Spa** at the Northcross Shopping Center in Huntersville, as well as another salon in the Charlotte area. Over the past 18 years this couple has perfected the art of pampering, not just themselves, but others. If time is short, come in for a relaxing massage ($35-$55) or, perhaps, a facial ($35-$70). But, guys, if you really want to impress your sweetheart, sign her up for Keziah's Day of Beauty ($250). First, a massage, a European facial, hair conditioning treatment, manicure, pedicure, and therapeutic footbath will leave her feeling relaxed and beautiful. After she enjoys a nourishing and delicious garden lunch, a professional hair styling and make-up application will have her looking great for your evening celebration. She will depart with a bag of spa gifts that will keep her looking her best. As you are going to be there anyway, book The Pavarotti ($115) treatment for yourself – which includes a haircut, manicure and massage. After all, you will want to look and feel your best too, won't you? Call ☎ 704-892-5506 to book your appointments and discover, as Wink says, "Inner Peace... Outer Beauty."

Before heading out, slip around the corner from Keziah's to **Uncommon Scents Pottery & Gift Baskets**, ☎ 704-895-0197 and fax 895-8872. Upon first visit, we were initially impressed by the inventory of candles, wind chimes, birdhouses, aromatherapy products, bath salts and collectibles. But, it was when we came upon the display of imported Spanish ceramic pottery that we knew we would leave with shopping bags heavier and wallets lighter. Norman began his love affair with Spain at the age of 16. Since that time, he has traveled extensively there and written several books and articles to introduce others to this amazingly vibrant and fascinating country. Now, we, as a couple, share this Iberian passion. And, as souvenirs of

our travels there, we have several pieces of pottery in our home. Brightly colored and attractive, these pieces are invariably practical as well. At Uncommon Scents you will find a full line: plates – for dining or decorating, flower pots of all shapes and sizes – many with saucers for indoor use, lampshades, house numerals, sundials, outdoor fountains, and sangria jars. Look, also, for wonderful examples of Romano glass from Mallorca in the Spanish Balearic Islands. Each museum-quality piece, fashioned using a centuries-old technique developed by the Romans, is hand-blown, then buried in a mixture of silica and iron oxide until cool. A friendly greeting awaits you as well – from the owner and staff, and from Carolina and Gretchen, two very attentive dachshunds.

Maggie Valley

Maggie Valley is, in fact, only a portion of the area encompassed by this chapter, which explores a circle formed by the valley itself to the north and taking in the Cherokee Indian Reservation, Dillsboro, Sylva, Balsam, and Waynesville.

Dominant in these parts are the Great Smoky Mountains, the oldest in the world and with more peaks over 6,000 feet than anywhere else in the Eastern United States. Formed over millions of years as huge northern glaciers drifted south carrying in their wake seeds, trees and even animals, the mountains assumed their identity when the ice melted and the seeds and animals created their own habitats. What evolved was a place more biologically diverse than any other on earth – a fact recognized in 1934 when the Great Smoky Mountains National Park was created. Within its 800 square miles are 200,000 acres of virgin forest, 700 miles of rivers and streams and more than 800 miles of trails. Designated by UNESCO as an international biosphere reserve, the park has the largest variety of flora and fauna in the world, including 1,600 different types of wildflowers, 140 species of trees, 200 different songbirds, 50 kinds of fish and 60 species of mammals – stunning statistics indeed.

There are numerous B&Bs throughout this area, but we also found on our travels a handful of unusual places to stay. Among these are romantically rustic log cabins, a wonderfully renovated 18th-century mountain hotel, a thoroughly modern lodging that offers llama treks, and a remote mountaintop inn. Add to the mix the attractions of the Great Smoky Mountains and you have all the makings for the most romantic of weekends.

Things to Do

Outdoor lovers will be in their element here. The Great Smoky Mountains National Park is so vast and the allure of the Blue Ridge Mountains so strong, that you will be faced with a very pleasant dilemma – where to begin. The more common attractions are well documented, and many other activities are detailed below, but the most discerning romantic weekenders will want to discover those places off the beaten track. To make the most of your all-too-short weekend, we suggest you get in touch with Don Hendershot and **Take A Walk On The Wild Side**, ☎ 828-452-4569. He is at 897 Balsam Ridge Road, Waynesville, NC 28786. Don, a noted author/naturalist, will escort you on a private guided tour of these western North Carolina mountains. He knows these parts like the back of his hand, and he will introduce you to any number of out-of-the-way romantic places that you would be unlikely to ferret out on your own. Don also offers a number of standard tours, which range in price from $40 to $50 per person.

Fly-fishing is a common form of recreation in these parts. If you wish to cast your lot in this direction, then contact **Lowe Fly Shop & Outfitters**, ☎ 828-452-0039, fax 452-2860, 977 North Main Street, Waynesville, NC 28786. They offer half-day walk trips, morning or evening, for $250 a couple and full-day walk trips for $50 more. Each guide is licensed and insured and all equipment you will need is supplied, as are beverages on the shorter trips and a lunch on the longer ones. Lowe's will have guide boxes on board . These contain a large selection of patterns of flies that the guides may suggest using as the trip unfolds. The advantage here is that you have access to many

varieties without having to purchase them prior to your trip. Only those you decide to use will be charged to your account. You will also need to procure a North Carolina fishing license, which allows you to fish within the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

And what sporting couple could ignore that the fast flowing, mountain rivers are ideal for whitewater rafting? The **Nantahala Outdoor Center**, ☎ 800-232-7238, www.noc.com, offers the area's most comprehensive choice of US Forest Service-permitted trips on five different rivers in three states. Whether you are a novice or highly experienced in this sport, Nantahala Outdoor Center has a trip suited to your needs. As rates vary widely according to trip duration, location and category, we would suggest that you call ahead for prices according to your interests.

A far more unusual mountain experience can be found at **WindDancers Lodging & Llama Treks**, ☎ 828-627-6986, e-mail info@winddsncersnc.com, www.winddancer.com, 1966 Martins Creek Road. Clyde, NC 28721. Let's pass over the lodging part for a moment. That is described in some detail below and, in any event, you don't have to stay at the lodge to undertake their Llama Adventure. The gentle and naturally sure-footed llama was domesticated 4,000 to 5,000 years ago by the Inca Indians in the mountains of Peru and Bolivia. Capitalizing upon the these creatures' disposition and work potential, they were pressed into service to transport the goods that built the famous ancient Inca Empire. To this day, llamas play an integral role in South American culture. Here in the western North Carolina highlands, though, their tasks are not nearly so arduous. Between March and mid-November you can take your choice of either a lunch trek or dinner trek at $40 per person. For even more fun, book a day trek or even a three-day trek; call ahead for prices.

Our Suggestion: Opt for a lunch trek, where experienced guides will take you through either the Nantahala or Pisgah National For-

> *ests, highlighting the blooms and natural foliage. In addition to a delicious meal, you will get the opportunity to touch, lead and become friends with the llamas.*

It may come as a surprise, given the large number of high mountains, that there is but one ski resort in this area of North Carolina – **Cataloochee Ski Area**, ☎ 828-926-0285, 800-768-0285, e-mail ski@cataloochee.com, www.cataloochee.com. They are at 1080 Ski Lodge Road, Maggie Valley, NC 28751. Approaching on I-40 from the east, take Exit 20, or from the west use Exit 27. Just above Maggie Valley and four miles off US 19 you will find the resort, which has been attracting ski enthusiasts for nearly 40 years. Presently, the season runs from Thanksgiving Weekend through mid-March. The slopes and trails are rated 25% beginner, 50% intermediate and 25% advanced. The top elevation is 5,400 feet and the base 4,660 feet. With a vertical drop of 740 feet, its longest run with natural snow covers up to two miles of open mountainside. For an up-to-date ski report call ☎ 828-926-3588; if you could benefit from instruction, book yourselves into the Cataloochee Ski & Snowboard School.

There are less energetic ways of enjoying this spectacular scenery, and our favorite among these is a ride on the old-fashioned **Great Smoky Mountains Railway** in Dillsboro, ☎ 828-586-8811, 800-872-4681, www.gsmr.com. The railroad arrived in this part of North Carolina in the very last years of the 19th century, facilitating the transportation of logs and, thus, giving rise to logging as a major industry in the region. Upon the steep grades of this terrain, however, traditionally designed locomotives were unable to hold their traction. Necessity, the mother of invention, spawned a new engine design with vertical cylinders that turned crankshaft gears transmitting power directly to the wheels and forcing more traction to the track. Rail transportation would not reign long in the region, however. Logging came to a halt with the creation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in 1934 and, by 1948, the proliferation of the automobile made passenger train service redundant. Forty years later, dwindling traffic and high maintenance costs finally

forced Norfolk Southern to file for abandonment of the 67 miles of track between Dillsboro and Murphy. An unlikely savior was found in the form of the State of North Carolina, which purchased the line and promptly leased it to the Great Smoky Mountains Railway, Inc. In addition to continuing freight services, this company reinstated passenger services in the form of scenic excursions. Operating diesel-electric locomotives and a Baldwin steam locomotive that served in the Army during World War II and featured prominently in several movies, these trips have become one of the great attractions of the region.

Trains depart, between March and December, from Bryson City, Andrews and Dillsboro, with those departing from Dillsboro being of most interest to romantic weekenders. The Tuckaseegee River excursion, lasting for 3½ hours, takes you through the Cowee Tunnel and includes a one-hour layover at Bryson City. When the train is pulled by the diesel locomotive, the cost is $21.95 for seating in an open car or coach, $26.95 for the Crown Coach and $28.95 for a Club Car. When the train is pulled by the steam locomotive, fares are $5 more for each class of seating – a small extra price to pay for the nostalgia. If you are very fortunate or cleverly plan ahead, your trip may coincide with the occasional offering of the steam-engine-powered "3-in-1" Dillsboro-to-Andrews excursion. This trip lasts 6½ hours, includes a box lunch, and costs $76.95 for open car or coach, $88.95 for Crown Coach and $93.95 for the extra luxury of the adults-only Club Car. Finally, for the ultimate in romance on the rails, join the 2½-hour Twilight Dinner Train, which departs at 7:30 each Saturday evening. The fare of $49.95 per person features a delicious meal (the menu changes seasonally), served in one of three beautifully restored dining cars that originally worked on the Seaboard and Atlantic Coast Lines. The Silver Meteor, from the New York-to-Miami line, the Dixie Flyer, from the Cincinnati–Atlanta–Tampa route, and the Champion, from the New York-to-Tampa service, are each furnished with candlelit white linen-draped tables set with china and silver. To avoid disappointment, book at least 72 hours in advance.

The quaint village of **Dillsboro**, named in honor of William Dills, offers another pleasant diversion for romantic weekenders. Founded in 1884, it became the terminus for the Western North Carolina Railroad and, well into the 1900s, was a bustling summer resort. These days, the two streets that run parallel to the tracks are lined by an eclectic collection of more than 60 galleries, specialty shops, restaurants and inns.

Just to the east lies the seat of Jackson County, **Sylva**, a small town of somewhat lesser charm, established in 1880. This town came by its name in a rather unusual manner. The daughter of the town's founder, E. R. Hampton, decided it should be named after an itinerant Dane, William D. Sylva, who worked at a local sawmill owned by one of Hampton's relatives. Among the attractions here is the outstanding circa 1914 **Jackson County Courthouse**, set atop a hill, with 107 steps and an imposing dome. It has recently undergone an extensive renovation, although it was functionally supplanted in August 1994 by a new government building.

Waynesville, to the northeast, is the seat of Haywood County – the county with the most mountain peaks over 6,000 feet in the Eastern United States. Larger than the towns mentioned above and more spread out, it is home to a host of B&Bs and inns, with more than 100 retail shops, restaurants and galleries. This town even has its own website, www.downtownwaynesville.com.

Taking 276 north from Waynesville and turning west on 119 takes you up through **Maggie Valley** itself. The story of how the valley came to be named after a pretty 14-year-old mountain girl is fascinating indeed, and you may enjoy reading more about it in *Maggie of Maggie Valley, NC*, written by Maggie's daughter, Patty Pylant Kosier, and available in many local stores.

How Maggie Valley Got Its Name

The community of Maggie Valley came by its name in a rather unusual fashion. In the very early 1900s, Jack Setzer, having grown weary of hiring someone to travel the five miles to nearby Plott to pick up the Valley's mail, undertook a mission to convince the US Postal Department to establish a post office in the isolated wilderness settlement where he lived. To this end, he set up a makeshift post office in the front room of his home and, for six months, kept careful records of incoming letters and newspapers. Upon receipt of those records, the Postal Department agreed to Setzer's request, asking that he submit three proposed names for the new Post Office. His first three suggestions, already in use by other North Carolina localities, were rejected. Setzer then submitted the names of his three daughters and, on May 10, 1904, he received official notification that postal authorities had named the region Maggie, North Carolina. Upon learning the news, his 14-year-old daughter, Maggie, was less than overjoyed. Embarrassed to tears, she ran up the mountain and hid in the old log cabin where she had been born. Just three years later, Maggie wed Ira Pylant of Nashville, Tennessee and moved to Texas. She did, however, return to her beloved valley on many occasions before her death at the age of 88. In fact, the residents eventually fashioned Maggie "patron saint" of the valley. Today, her caricature appears on signboards and in advertising for a host of the community's businesses, cleverly captioned "Maggie Sez..."

While the scenery is quite majestic, we should forewarn you that this area has been highly commercialized. Route 19 is rimmed with any number of motels and tourist attractions, such as the Ghost Town In The Sky, Stompin' Grounds and a small Opry House that, likely, will be of limited appeal to romantic weekenders.

At the head of the valley, Route 19 winds its way through the mountains to the **Cherokee Indian Reservation**. Information can be obtained from the Cherokee Visitors Center, PO Box 46027, Cherokee, NC 28719, 800-438-1601, e-mail chero@drake.dnet.net, www.cherokee-nc.com. Our research on the reservation was initiated by a packet of glossy promotional material that was interesting, informative, cleverly presented and enticing. It was with a high degree of fascination that we followed the road through these hauntingly majestic mountains into the 56,000-acre reservation. What we were to find, however, was the antipathy of its clever, modern, marketing.

Alongside Route 19 was a succession of often run-down and sometimes deserted motels bearing names resonant of old cowboy and Indian movies. Then there were places like Santa's Land Theme Park & Zoo (which, at the very least, seems entirely out of place), various gold mines, trout farms, etc. In short, commercialism has run rampant as the once-proud and glorious Cherokee people parody themselves to eke out a living. Next to various gift stores hawking "traditional Indian souvenirs," you may find a store selling discount cigarettes. In addition, the Cherokee, taking advantage of their reservation rights, have established a host of gambling establishments. Tribal Bingo is open seven days a week. And the new, large and outlandish Harrah's Cherokee Casino with multi-lane valet parking is a glitzy combination of 2,250 games, three restaurants, live entertainment and a child care center. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, the hope of making a small fortune lures visitors by the hundreds.

Few visitors pause long enough to notice the three serious attractions here. If you want to do more than scratch the commercial surface of this once-proud people and better understand their history, then take time to visit the **Museum of the Cherokee Indian**, ☎ 828-497-3481, Highway 441 & Drama Road – winner of the 1998 Mountain Heritage Award and the 1998 Signature of Excellence Award. Following a similar vein, take in the **Oconaluftee Indian Village**, ☎ 828-497-2111. Finally, if you are in this area between June and late August, you will be both charmed and fascinated by a performance of ***Unto***

These Hills, ☎ 828-497-2111). This drama of the tragedy and triumph of the Cherokee Indian celebrated its 50th anniversary season in 1999. It's played out in a 2,800-seat open-air theater.

Culturally, the Maggie Valley region stands high. Every July, for the 16th time in 1999, it hosts the **North Carolina International Folk Festival** known as Folkmoot USA, ☎ 828-452-2997, 877 FOLK USA (365-5872), e-mail folkmoot@pobox.com, www.folkmoot.com. More than 80 countries and 155 different groups have appeared here demonstrating their cultural heritage through colorful, authentically reproduced costumes, lively dance and enchanting music. In 1999, folk groups from such diverse places as the Ivory Coast, Kalmyk Republic, Malaysia, Mexico, Nepal, Peru, Turkey, the Ukraine and the USA were among those scheduled to take part. Adding to the attraction, communities such as Asheville, Bryson City, Fletcher, Franklin, Hendersonville, Maggie Valley, Mars Hill, Sylva and Waynesville host events concurrently. Fashioned after the very popular European festivals, this is among the largest of such celebrations in the US and has repeatedly been nominated by the Southeastern Tourism Society as a "Top 20 Event in the Southeast."

Sweet Dreams

Balsam

The **Balsam Mountain Inn**, ☎ 828-456-9498, 800-224-9498, fax 456-9298, e-mail merrily@dnet.net, www1.aksi.net/~cmark/balsam.htm, Box 40, Balsam. This inn lies on 26-acres of grounds near the crest of the Great Balsam Mountains, just off US 23/74 between Sylva and Waynesville. The neoclassical Victorian structure, nestled in the mountains above quaint Balsam, originally belonged to Joseph Kenney and Walter Christy, brothers-in-law from Athens, Georgia, who began its construction in 1905. It opened three years later as the Balsam Mountain Springs Hotel. Very soon, guests, carried by the gracious old Southern Railway to the old Balsam Depot (at 3,500

feet, once the highest railway station east of the Rockies), arrived to stay for weeks, enjoying the therapeutic properties of seven freshwater springs on the grounds. Over the years, the inn experienced only very minor changes and, although clinging to vestiges of its original grandeur, it was rather dilapidated by the time its current proprietor, Merrily Teasley, envisioned its potential in 1990. That the inn was reclaimed and is today a place of considerable charm must be credited to her insight and investment.

In the fall of that year and at much personal cost, Merrily undertook an extensive renovation, very closely following the guidelines of the US Department of the Interior for the restoration of historic buildings and, through the process, creating a delightful blend of the old and new. First, the 100 rather small guest roomswere converted into 50 much larger ones of varying sizes and painted in pastel colors. Each was finished out with brightly colored fabrics and original artwork and furnished with decorative iron bed, antique wicker furniture and an assortment of other period pieces. The bathrooms, many with antique claw-foot tubs, follow the same style, with one featuring a hammock swinging right next to the tub!

Three types of guest rooms are available: standard bedroom with either a king or two double beds; a bed sitting room with a king bed or, our recommendation, a two-room suite with either a king or two double beds. Rates, which include a generous full breakfast, are complicated somewhat by two seasons – June to October and November to May – which are further sub-divided into Sunday to Thursday and weekends/holidays categories. They range from $90 to $100 for a standard bedroom, $100 to $115 for a bed sitting room and $115 to $150 for a two-room suite. Interestingly, whenever possible, Merrily provides guests with keys to a range of rooms, allowing them to select the one that most takes their fancy.

Guests will be enchanted at first sight of the Balsam Mountain Inn's three-storied wooden façade, guarded on each end by twin towers. And, the 100-foot-long, two-tier porch that extends the breadth of the structure is a place that will beckon with promises of relaxation time and time again. This is a perfect place, while lounging in the old oak rocking chairs with their new hand woven seats and backs, to take in marvelous views over Grassy Bald and Beef Market Top mountains. Inside, the spacious lobby is warmed by two fireplaces, filled with wicker furniture, and accented with Oriental rugs and a literal forest of living plants. Rooms at the base of each tower host an enticing gift shop and a library with more than 2,000 volumes, cards, puzzles and games. Rounding out the enticements is the Balsam Mountain Inn Restaurant, detailed in the *Tables for Two* section below. In sum, the Balsam Mountain Inn holds some very pleasant surprises, and it quickly became one of our favorites.

Cataloochee

The **Cataloochee Ranch**, ☎ 828-926-1401, 800-868-1401, www.cataloochee-ranch.com, 119 Ranch Drive, Maggie Valley, NC 28751, is a 1,000-acre ranch that crowns a ridge at a 5,000-foot elevation above Maggie Valley. Surveying the marvelous vistas over range after range of the nearby Great Smoky Mountains, it is easy to see why the Cherokee name "Catalooche," (wave after wave) is so appropriate. Tom and "Miss Judy" Alexander founded the ranch in 1934, purchasing the present 1,000-acre property four years later. In the intervening years, it has been transformed from a rugged sheep and cattle farm into a graceful blend of historic structures and up-to-date facilities. We were pleasantly surprised to find such modern, and very romantic, accommodations in this remote location.

There are six guest rooms in the Main Ranch House, of which we would highly recommend the Galax, a large corner room with private entrance and Jacuzzi tub, which rents for $185 a couple. Rates for the five other rooms range from $145 to $175. The Silverbell Lodge is comprised of six suites, and, though they are all delightful, we believe you will like most the Cedar Suite or the White Pine Suite renting for $210. Each has a living room with cathedral ceiling, fireplace, kitchen, two large loft bedrooms and, of course, mountain views. The remaining four suites cost either $165 or $200 a night. If you want more space and luxury, you should consider booking one of nine private cabins, with fireplace, refrigerator, coffeemaker, radio and private bathroom. Four of these – Pond House, Willow, Dogwood and Sassafras – are classified as Romance Cabins and, in addition to the above amenities, include Jacuzzi tub, wet bar, private deck, mountain view and TV/VCR. The cost for a Romance Cabin is $275 per night, with the remaining five renting for $195 to $225 a night. To ensure your privacy, there are no telephones in the guest rooms or cabins, although courtesy telephones can be found in the Main Ranch House and in the Silverbell Lodge Common Room. You may also wonder that there is no mention of air-conditioning. That is because there is none. In fact, this mile-high location will leave you thinking more along the lines of mid-summer morning fires!

All rates, as quoted above, are on the Modified American Plan (MAP), which includes both breakfast and dinner – family-style feasts of southern regional Appalachian cuisine served in the ranch dining rooms or at frequent outdoor barbecues or "steak-outs." The rates do not include lunch, which can be purchased separately, a 17% service charge, a 6% North Carolina sales tax and 3% Haywood County room tax.

Rates also include the use of all facilities and most activities, which include tennis, hiking, trout fishing, horseshoes, table-tennis, badminton, croquet, a 20-foot heated swim-spa and horse-drawn wagon or scenic hay rides. You will, however, pay extra for the privilege of horseback riding. Half-day rides, costing $35 per person for ranch guests, depart at 9:30 am and at 2 pm and last two to three hours, depending on the route taken. Full-day rides, at $85 for guests with lunch included, last approximately seven hours and are scheduled upon request and contingent upon the availability of personnel. Private rides are possible with advance notice and trail riding lessons are available when staffing permits.

Cataloochee Ranch is truly a place for all seasons, and it is the on-mountain inn nearest the Cataloochee Ski Resort, just a mile over the hill. It is also an easygoing place, with jeans being suitable for most occasions and casual attire – certainly no ties – suggested for dinner. Remember, though, that at this elevation, even in the summertime, temperatures rarely rise above the mid-70s and at night they can drop to the 50s. Obviously, in winter you will want to take much warmer clothing.

Our suggestion: Absolutely not to be missed is the evening bonfire, where guests gather after dinner to chat and to watch the stars and galaxies – the greatest show in this part of the universe.

Clyde

Wind Dancers Lodging & Llama Treks, ☎ 828-627-6986, e-mail info@winddncersnc.com, www.winddancer.com, 1966 Martins Creek Road. Clyde, NC 28721, is found a bit outside of our defined area for this chapter. Nevertheless, this new B&B, set in 270 acres of secluded wilderness mountain land with meandering streams sheltering a complete watershed, deserves careful consideration. In addition to offering unique accommodations, the proprietors here both raise llamas and conduct llama treks. These activities are described in the *Things To Do* section above. As directions for reaching the lodge are a bit

complicated and vary according to your point of origin, we would suggest that you procure these from your hosts when you call to make your reservation.

The accommodations are found within three ultra-contemporary log buildings that, between them, house nine spacious guest rooms. Among the Maple Lodge rooms, you will find three interesting choices. The Casa Mexico, with the bright décor of old Mexico, has a queen-sized bed and loveseat sleeper. The Casa Santa Fe, featuring a blend of Spanish, Indian and American furnishings and Native American art, has a queen-sized bed below and a twin-sized bed in the loft. The Camp Kodiak, also with a queen-sized bed below and a twin in the loft, whimsically brings together Eskimo carvings and art, snowshoes and even a totem pole. Each of these also has a soaking tub for two, full bath with shower, fireplace within a pleasant sitting area and a small, but fully-equipped, kitchen. A continental breakfast is served in a small communal dining area with majestic mountain views, and a picnic area with gas barbecue grill is just a few yards away. Rooms here rent for $125 a night, double-occupancy.

Llama Lodge Rooms are found on two floors off a delightful two-story, communal greatroom. Here, inviting leather loveseats flank a large wood-burning fireplace which features a hand-carved totem pole above the mantle piece. Completing the furnishings are large dining tables and a sideboard where a deluxe buffet breakfast is served.

Our suggestion: Be advised that this county is semi-dry – meaning that it is advisable to bring your favorite beverage and stash it away in the refrigerator here.

The Rec Room, found in the airy loft, has a pool table, game table, large video library and paperback books.

On the first floor are two guest rooms. The Peru Room, with South American influences and named in honor of the land of the llamas, has a queen-sized bed and sleeper loveseat. The Appalachian Room, with a queen-sized bed, reflects the rich mountain heritage – fitted out in twig furniture and embel-

lished with primitive farm tools. Second floor rooms each have queen-sized bed and sleeper sofa. The Kenya Room features a reed ceiling, dark wicker furniture and native artifacts and carvings from Africa. The Bali Room is totally Indonesian in ambiance. All four rooms in the Llama Lodge have fireplace, tub for two in the bedroom and a separate shower in the full bathroom. Each rents for $115 a night per couple.

Dillsboro

The **Jarrett House**, ☎ 828-586-0265 or 800-972-5623, on the corner of Haywood and Highway 441, PO Box 219, Dillsboro, NC 28725, has been operating since 1886, making it one of the oldest inns in North Carolina. It was designated a National Historic Place in 1984. Just two years after the Western North Carolina Railway came to Dillsboro in 1882, the founder of the town, William Allen Dills, commissioned the hotel's construction, naming it The Mount Beulah Hotel in honor of his daughter, Mrs. Beulah Dills Weaver, who had been born in the house next door. The mountain facing the hotel came by its name in the same manner.

The hotel soon became the official dining place for passengers and employees of the railway. In fact, the train from Asheville scheduled a 20-minute stop for midday dinner each day, telegraphing the number of reservations ahead from Balsam. In the latter part of the decade, as Dillsboro evolved into a resort town, the hotel began catering to summertime visitors. The property was sold in 1894 to R. Frank Jarrett, who capitalized upon the beautiful sulphur spring that bubbled up into soapstone basin beside the hotel, building a summer house encircled by seats so his guests could partake of the waters and changing the name to The Jarrett Springs Hotel. Its fame, though, was spread far and wide because of the delectable food, served up country-style by the innkeeper's wife, "Miss Sallie." Jarrett cured his own hams using a special recipe, and the fried ham, presented on huge platters along with red-eye gravy, hot buttermilk biscuits, sourwood honey, homemade butter and, in season, fresh vegetables from the garden, became legendary.

Upon Jarrett's death in 1950, the property passed through several hands until, in 1975, it was purchased by the present owners, Jim Hatbarger, his wife Jean and their two sons. Among their stated goals was reclaiming the hotel's culinary reputation. To that end, in the spacious dining room with seating for 125 guests, lunch is served between 11:30 am and 2:30 pm, dinner between 4 and 8 pm and Traditional Sunday Dinner is offered from 11:30 am to 8 pm. The hotel itself retains its traditional architectural style and has 22 comfortable guest rooms priced between $85 to $90 a night.

Sylva

Mountain Brook, ☎ 828-586-4329, www.mountainbrook.com, Mountain Brook Road, Sylva, NC 28779-9659, is on US 23/441 nine miles south of Dillsboro. If your preference is for a romantically remote log and native stone cottage, you will find this place ideal. Although there are a variety to select from, our recommendation is a Romancer. These have a king-sized netted canopy bed, bubble tub for two overlooking the fireplace – with an unlimited supply of firewood included, living room, private bath, fully-equipped kitchen, and a private porch with swing. The tariff is $130 a night plus 9% tax. You will be spared the intrusion of television and telephone upon your privacy and romance. Adding to the charm is an on-site bungalow with a whirlpool spa and cedar sauna, which may be reserved for private use.

Waynesville

The **Mountain Creek Bed & Breakfast**, ☎ 828-456-5509 or 800-557-9766, 146 Chestnut Walk Drive, Waynesville, best reached by taking Exit 27 off Interstate 40 and following US 23-74, is five miles from Waynesville proper. It was in 1995, while tandem cycling through the Smokies in search of a property, that Hylah and Guy Smalley, the innkeepers, chanced upon this lodge. They were instantly enchanted by the structure, with its old mill wheel; by the setting – atop a hill above a pond and with six-acres of woods, gardens and paths; and by

the glorious mountain vistas. It was just three months later that they received their first guests.

There are four attractive guest rooms in the Main House, each with either a king-sized or a queen-sized bed and private bath with shower. Two have soaking tubs, and the two upstairs rooms feature a private balcony affording spectacular views of the mountains. The original Carriage House, a few yards away, is comprised of two suites with exposed stone walls. Each has a queen-sized bed, private porch and Jacuzzi tub with a shower. One is cleverly decorated with period hats from the 1920s; the other, reflecting Hylah and Guy's hobby, has a bicycling theme. Rates range upwards from $90 per couple inclusing a gourmet breakfast which is served either inside or on the 1,600-square-foot deck that wraps around the west side of the house. There is a two-night minimum stay requirement in October. At your request, Hylay and Guy gladly will arrange for little extras, such as roses in your room or a gourmet picnic lunch for an outing in the mountains. Finally, inquire when booking about their Lovebirds Package.

The Swag, ☎ 828-926-0430, 926-3119, fax 926-2036, e-mail letters@theswag.com, www.theswag.com, is at 2300 Swag Road, Waynesville, NC 28736. This is off Route 276 almost halfway between Route 19 and Interstate 40. From the town of Waynesville, turn west on Hemphill Road and continue for four miles until you reach The Swag Gate, where the adventure begins. The private driveway winds upwards over the next 2½ miles, climbing 1,100 feet in the process to an altitude of 5,000, feet where the mountain inn sits amidst a 250-acre estate.

Our research for the *Romantic Weekend* guides has taken us into every corner of Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and Washington DC and to the coastal regions of Georgia. In the process, we have investigated hundreds of places to stay, selecting the most interesting ones – using criteria of locale, style, history and ambiance – to recommend to our readers. Rarely, however, have we come across a place of such sophistication and with as many glowing attributes as The Swag. Certainly, we have never found its equal in such a remote and fantastically beautiful location.

Dan and Deener Matthews purchased the undeveloped property that had been called "The Swag" in 1969. The name derived from a mountain term describing a dip in a ridge. Two years later, they contracted with a local builder to reassemble five log structures they had assiduously collected into a summer home. The living room came from an old church in Hancock County, Tennessee; the kitchen from a two-story log home; and the oldest part, set at the lower end of the front porch, dates from 1795. Being gregarious folk, the Matthews often invited their friends to their new mountain home. Furthermore, Dan, who has his roots in this area but is the long-serving Rector of Trinity Church on Wall Street in New York City, began to use their summer place for church retreats. It wasn't until they opened the house to guests visiting the World's Fair in Knoxville, Tennessee in 1982, however, that an onslaught of requests for future reservations spurred them to seriously consider creating a mountain inn. The Swag, sitting on the Cataloochee Divide of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park with which it shares a one-mile boundary, has been a work in progress ever since.

Currently, guests have a choice of accommodations within five buildings, including log cabins, that contain 15 guest rooms. Hand-hewn beams, stone walls and working fireplaces create a luxuriously rustic ambiance while handmade quilts, woven rugs and unique pieces of art give each room an individual character. Beds are either queen-sized or king-sized and in-room amenities include a small refrigerator, coffeemaker with grinder, hairdryer, makeup mirror, telephone, radio-CD player alarm clock, toiletries and fluffy cotton robes. There is no television to intrude upon the ambiance but, to keep you apprised of the latest news, a copy of *The New York Times Fax Summary* is slipped under the door each morning.

While all of the rooms are romantic and highly recommendable, we will highlight here a few of our favorites. The Loft, room number 401, renting for $440 per night, is a corner room with a king-sized bed upstairs in the sleeping loft, stone fireplace, wet bar, two baths – one with whirlpool tub and steam shower, and a balcony overlooking the park. The Hideaway,

room number 404, and also $440 per night, has a queen-sized bed, fireplace, wet bar, private balcony, whirlpool tub with a view and steam shower. The Ridge View, room number 403 and renting for $450 a night, offers a corner room with king-sized bed, French doors leading to a private balcony with a spectacular view, fireplace, whirlpool tub and steam shower, wet bar and a stairway leading to a loft outfitted with a sofa bed and a second bathroom. The Cabin, room number 406 and costing $465 each night, is a hand-hewn log cabin brightened by skylights and embellished with museum-quality rustic furniture. It features a king-sized bedroom and large living room, fireplace, double whirlpool tub, steam shower and private deck. Finally, the Two Story, another hand-hewn log cabin, has two bedrooms and two bathrooms and costs $525 a night. It is comparable in amenities to the other rooms, but uniquely offers a soaking tub on the deck with the most amazing of views. Other rooms rent for between $295 and $440 per night.

All rates quoted are applicable to weekends, three-day holiday weekends and the high season in October. They will seem more affordable, too, taking into consideration that they are structured on the American Plan (AP) that includes three meals a day for two people. Expect the addition, though, of a 15% service charge, 6% state tax and 3% room tax.

On the subject of food, each day begins with breakfast, which is served buffet-style and may include such delicacies as cider-simmered oatmeal, fragrant breads, fresh juices and an ever-changing variety of pancakes, waffles and pastries. Lunch offers a three-course menu that rotates daily or, if you prefer, a picnic (and even a backpack you can borrow) for a romantic adventure out on the trails. With the exception of the Thursday cookout, a 6 pm social hour with hors d'oeuvres precedes dinner in the dining room at 7 pm. Dinner is a four-course delight prepared and presented by Chef Jack Keeran and pastry chef Zoe Davis. And at The Swag Sunday Brunch you can expect to find a choice of salads, smoked salmon, asparagus, fresh fruit, assorted muffins, poached eggs du jour accompanied by home-fried red bliss potatoes, and delicious home-baked desserts.

A word to the wise here. This county is very dry, at least with regard to alcohol. So if you enjoy a little tipple or wine with your meal, remember to come well stocked.

Romantic activities abound, too, at The Swag. Start with a relaxing soak in the Outdoor Spa where spectacular views stretch for 50 miles or so on a clear day. The Croquet Court offers some gentle exercise, with similar views. Especially romantic are the Hideaways, special secluded places spaced along the 2½-mile nature trail. Some have hammocks, others have a love seat, and some are elevated on stilts like a tree house for even more privacy. What a perfect setting to romance each other naturally, sharing a picnic lunch and bottle of champagne that you have been saving for a very special moment! Swag Pond, fed by spring water, may be a little cool for a dip, but the two-person hammock is certainly inviting, as are the 40-foot swing rope and flat-bottomed boat. If you are up for a little exercise, then put on your hiking boots. A short and not too strenuous 45-minute walk will get you to the Hemphill Creek Waterfall. And, one of the best vistas in the area is found about an hour's hike away at Hemphill Bald. Alternatively, investigate any number of trails that adjoin Great Smoky Mountain National Park. Back at The Swag, and totally concealed underground in Chestnut Lodge, is a regulation racquetball court, and a nearby redwood sauna to ease those aching muscles.

Dan and Deener are keen on nature and on selected weeks throughout the season they arrange, at no extra cost, guest speakers and workshops of special interest. During 1999 these explored such topics as Birding, Black Bears & "Unhuggables," Nature & Wildflowers, Smoky Mountains Nature, Native Americans, Logging History and Reflections on Art & Nature.

In talking with our hosts, we learned some fascinating bits and pieces about The Swag. The electric power and telephone lines are buried four feet underground, meaning that trees are spared from cutting and that no unseemly telephone poles spoil the natural sight lines. The temperature decreases five degrees for each thousand feet of elevation – 100° at the beach

translates to just 75° at The Swag. Spring comes to the bottom of The Swag – at the base of the driveway, three weeks before it reaches the top. Speaking of the driveway, it takes approximately 75 tons of new gravel to resurface it each spring. When taking the driveway down, you must keep your automobile in low gear to avoid overheating your brakes and stay to the outside of each curve. The altitude here translates to difficult winter weather and, consequently, The Swag is open from early May until about the third week in November only. During the winter months, when The Swag is closed, the contact numbers are ☎ 212-570-2071 or fax 570-9756.

Tables for Two

Unusually for such a remote area as this, two of the hotels we recommend employ either the American Plan (AP) or the Modified American Plan (MAP), and two others have quite interesting restaurants on-site. For this reason, we will recommend fewer restaurants in this chapter.

Balsam

The **Balsam Mountain Inn Restaurant**, ☎ 828-456-9498, 800-224-9498, fax 456-9298, in the Balsam Mountain Inn, shares its rather unusual ambiance created by a charming mix of old and new. The menu, too, reflects this style. Appetizers may be baked Brie served with slices of green apple and wafers ($7); mushrooms, stuffed with black beans, cream cheese and chives ($4.75); or smoked trout served with diced red onions, capers, mustard and wafers ($5.95). All entrées come with homemade bread, fresh vegetables and house salad with your choice of dressing. Main dishes may include pecan encrusted catfish with roasted red pepper sauce ($15.25); cucumber and dill pasta with baby shrimp ($13.75); and apple-smoked pork with caramelized leek sauce ($15.75). Requests to split an entrée will incur an extra $4 charge. Of the desserts, the Mississippi mud cake, a delicious blend of chocolate, marshmallow and fudge ($3.75), is very hard to overlook. The wine list is comparatively small, but has a decidedly international flavor; and

there is a fine mix of beers, including a micro-brew of the month.

Sylva

Lulu's Café, ☎ 828-586-8989, 612 West Main Street, features an interesting and varied menu. Starters might include a grilled portobello mushroom glazed with a citrus basil sauce and served with a baguette and a side of creamy gorgonzola dressing for dipping ($5.25); or spinach-basil pesto pita, flat pita bread baked with fresh spinach and basil pesto topped with provolone cheese ($4.50). Some of the salads are unusual and we would especially suggest you take a look at the Szechuan Salad – your choice of grilled chicken, shrimp or baked tofu on a bed of salad greens, topped with fresh fruit, jicama, cucumbers, red bell peppers, scallions and roasted sesame seeds. It's served with a side of Szechuan dressing (chicken $6.95, shrimp $7.95, or tofu $6.50). The entrées, served after 5 pm with a salad and bread, are tantalizingly varied. Look for Indonesian Shrimp Satay, large skewered shrimp rolled in curried coconut, baked and served with saffron basmati rice, grilled plantains and spicy peanut sauce ($15.95), or Artichoke Forrester, a tasty stew of onions, fresh tomatoes, mushrooms, bell peppers, garlic, flavorful country olives and artichokes, finished off with fresh herbs and white wine – all served on imported rotini and topped with toasted almonds, parsley and Parmesan ($10.95). An array of wines can be served either by the bottle or the glass, and there is a fine selection of micro-brew, imported and domestic beers.

Waynesville

The **Lomo Grill**, ☎ 828-452-5222 or fax 452-1746, 44 Church Street, in downtown Waynesville, is located in a beautifully restored building that dates from the 1920s. Opened as a restaurant in 1995, it has wasted no time in establishing a formidable reputation for authentic Italian Mediterranean cuisine. In fact, it has already garnered the National Beef Council's Award of Excellence and the Golden Fork Award and been designated a Gourmet Diner's Society Restaurant of Distinction. Many

dishes are either cooked over the Argentine grill or baked in the wood burning brick oven. As the menu is changed frequently, the dishes explained below are just a sample of what may be on offer when you come to dine. Tasty appetizers might be Mozzarella Rellena, homemade mozzarella wheels stuffed with baby spinach, prosciutto, Kalamata olives and sun-dried tomato ($8.95); or Calamari Fritto, fried calamari rings with mucho macho spicy marinara ($7.95). The salads are interesting, too: Organic Mesclun Mix, with balsamic vinaigrette ($4.95); Lomo's Gorgonzola Walnut Salad, spring mixed greens, caramelized walnuts and gorgonzola cheese with citrus vinaigrette; and Insalata Caprese, vine ripe tomatoes, homemade mozzarella and fresh basil (each $5.50). Among the pastas we liked the sound of were Linguine alla Vongole, linguine pasta, fresh farm-raised littleneck clams, white wine, parsley, garlic, crushed red pepper and a hint of cream ($19.95); or Penne Prosciutto e Asparagi, penne pasta, prosciutto cubes, green asparagus, white wine, cream, parmigiano and parsley ($21.95). Finally, among the poultry, fish and meats, we would recommend: Salmone alla Griglia, grilled fresh salmon topped with blueberry and strawberry balsamic habanero salsa, and served with roasted garlic mashed potatoes, grilled tomato and sweet potato curls ($21.95). The Lomo Grill is open only from late May to November, serving dinner Wednesday through Saturday from 5:30 to 10 pm.

Shops, Spas, etc.

The diverse geographical scope of this chapter makes it impractical to nominate many places in this section. But, since at least one of the recommended places to stay is designated "dry," allow us to introduce you to **The Classic Wine Seller**, ☎ 828-452-6000, 888-215-5569 or fax 452-6065, 20 Church Street, Waynesville. Here, we were pleasantly surprised to find an extensive collection of wines and beers, not just from the USA, but from around the world. And, it's just the place to go for a bottle of celebratory bubbly. Hours are Monday through Saturday from 10 am to 6 pm, but if you carefully arrange your

schedule to arrive between 2 and 5 pm on a Saturday you can imbibe at the wine tasting session.

Just around the corner, at 33 North Main Street, another store took our attention. **Ridge Runner Naturals**, ☎ 828-456-3003, stocks an array of nature-inspired gifts and accessories, including educational toys and games, nature books for all ages and a really interesting range of bird feeders and houses.

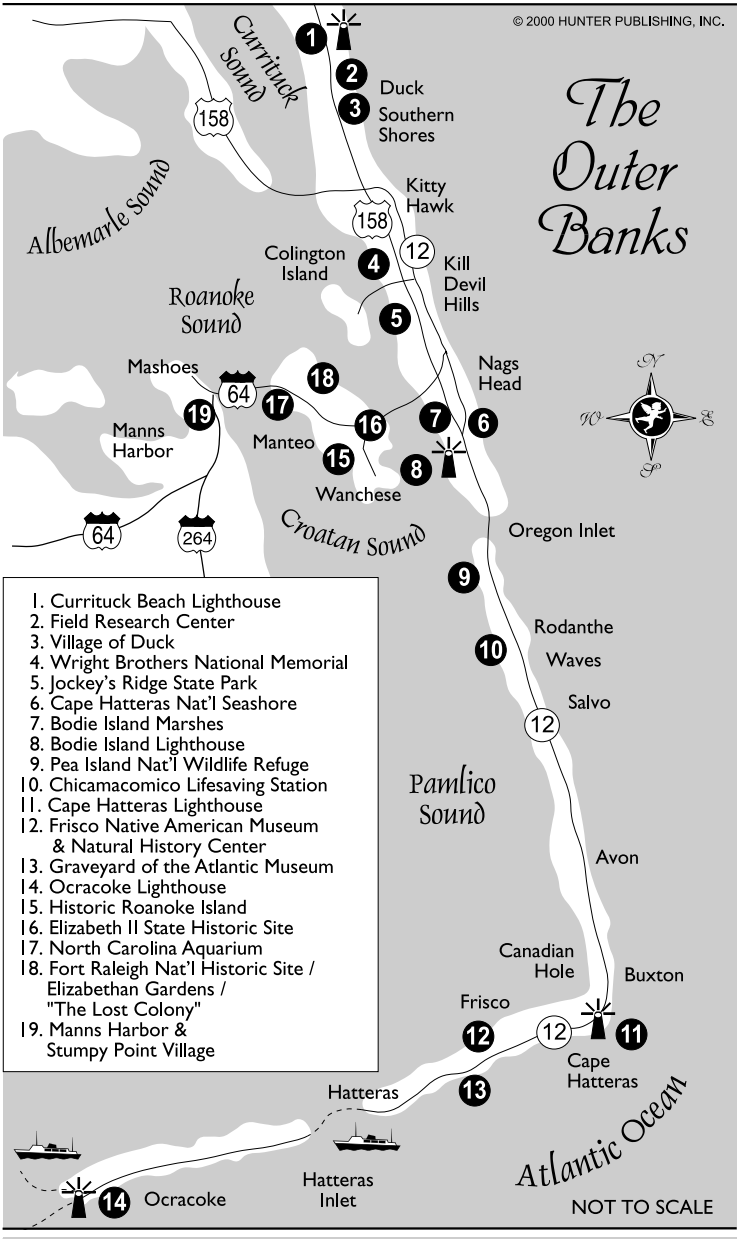
The Outer Banks

The Outer Banks is comprised of over 100 miles of long and slender barrier islands that stretch along the coast of northeast North Carolina and gently arc into the Atlantic Ocean. Best known for its pristine, windswept, white sand beaches, the Outer Banks really offers much more. And, while thoughts of the beach naturally equate to summer fun – and there is plenty here – each season offers its own particular brand of charm. Visitors will discover in the Outer Banks a year-round destination where national parks, wildlife refuges and maritime forests, tucked between the tumultuous ocean on the one side and the peaceful sound on the other, offer a host of adventures: bird watching, fishing, kayaking, hiking, windsurfing, and parasailing, to name but a few.

History lovers will thrill to tales of Indian lore, colonies lost and brave brothers who broke our bond to earth on a windy dune at Kill Devil Hills on December 17, 1903. But, most importantly for romantics, life here runs on island time. The pace of life is slower. Sleep late, enjoy barefoot walks on the beach, work on your tan, feast on seafood until you pop and shop till you drop. The options are many and the choices are yours.

History

It was in 1548 that Sir Walter Raleigh sent out the first expedition to explore this section of the Carolina coast. On July 4th, his captains, Philip Amadas and Arthur Barlowe, landed just north of what is now Kitty Hawk and began exploring the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The Outer Banks
Currituck Sound
Albemarle Sound
Roanoke Sound
Croatan Sound
Pamlico Sound
Atlantic Ocean
Duck
Southern Shores
Kitty Hawk
Colington Island
Kill Devil Hills
Nags Head
Mashoes
Manns Harbor
Manteo
Wanchese
Oregon Inlet
Rodanthe
Waves
Salvo
Avon
Canadian Hole
Buxton
Frisco
Cape Hatteras
Hatteras
Hatteras Inlet
Ocracoke
158
12
64
264
NOT TO SCALE
1. Currituck Beach Lighthouse
2. Field Research Center
3. Village of Duck
4. Wright Brothers National Memorial
5. Jockey's Ridge State Park
6. Cape Hatteras Nat'l Seashore
7. Bodie Island Marshes
8. Bodie Island Lighthouse
9. Pea Island Nat'l Wildlife Refuge
10. Chicamacomico Lifesaving Station
11. Cape Hatteras Lighthouse
12. Frisco Native American Museum & Natural History Center
13. Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum
14. Ocracoke Lighthouse
15. Historic Roanoke Island
16. Elizabeth II State Historic Site
17. North Carolina Aquarium
18. Fort Raleigh Nat'l Historic Site / Elizabethan Gardens / "The Lost Colony"
19. Manns Harbor & Stumpy Point Village

banks. There they encountered friendly Indians from a settlement on the northern Roanoke Island who gave the English a warm welcome. When Amadas and Barlowe returned to England after a brief stay, they took with them two local Indians, Manteo and Wanchese.

The Captains' report to Raleigh and his contemporaries aroused such interest that Raleigh immediately organized and equipped a fleet of seven ships to sail under the command of Sir Richard Grenville. After some consideration, Grenville determined that Roanoke Island would be the site of the first English settlement on the Outer Banks. He and his crews, which totaled 600 men, arrived in the summer of 1585 and spent several months clearing ground, building the earthworks of Fort Raleigh, and erecting houses to protect the 107 men who would stay behind. At the end of the summer, Grenville set sail for England promising to return early the following year with reinforcements and supplies.

Grenville, however, was delayed. The Governor, Ralph Lane, whom Grenville had left in command, and his men had a difficult winter. There were skirmishes with the Indians, during which their chief and a number of warriors were killed. When Sir Francis Drake visited the fort in the spring of 1586, Lane and his men, believing Grenville's return was uncertain and fearing the hostility of the Indians, decided it best to leave while they had friendly transport home. When Grenville finally arrived, he was dismayed to find Fort Raleigh deserted. After a short stay and leaving 15 of those soldiers behind to guard the fort, he returned to England.

The following winter, 1586-87, Raleigh made the necessary preparations to colonize the Outer Banks. When the sailing conditions were favorable, John White, in command of three ships bearing 120 men, women and children, departed Plymouth for the New World. When they arrived at Fort Raleigh, it was, once again deserted. The only clue as to the fate of Grenville's 15 men was a lone skeleton beside what was left of the fort.

Nevertheless, White's settlers began the task of putting things to right. After reconstructing the fort and building new homes,

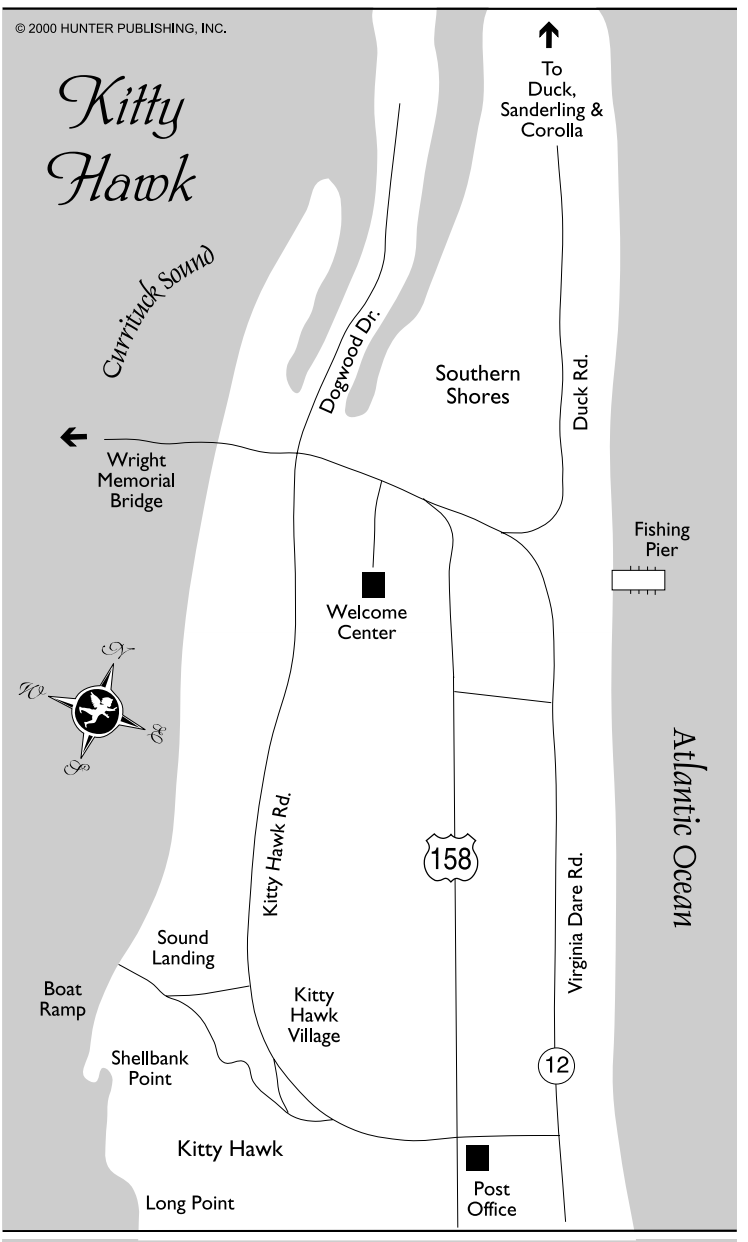
they settled in for their first winter on the island. On August 18, a baby girl was born to John White's daughter and son-in-law. She was the first English child born in the New World and her parents named her, quite appropriately, Virginia Dare. White set sail for England in the early fall of 1587, vowing to return with supplies the following year. England was at war with Spain, however, and those hostilities delayed White's return for three years. When White dropped anchor again on Roanoke Island in 1590, he found the village and fort deserted, the colonists gone and a single word and three letters, "CROATOAN" and "CRO," carved on a nearby tree. The search that followed revealed nothing, leaving a mystery that, to this day, has never been solved. With a heavy heart, White returned with his ships to England, leaving Roanoke, once again, to the Indians. And so it remained until, in 1665, colonists from Virginia arrived on the Outer Banks.

Present-day Roanoke Island is a busy fishing community and a popular tourist destination. In addition to its beauty and the many activities that flow from its natural attributes, romantic weekenders will find inviting options for accommodations and dining and a host of other attractions.

Things to Do

For those new to the Outer Banks, let us offer some information that will make getting around a bit easier. First, you may have heard this area referred to as "Nags Head." This is actually a misnomer. Nags Head is but one of a number of small cities and towns that line the Outer Banks from Corolla on the northern end to Cedar Island on the south, including, most notably, Duck, Kitty Hawk, Kill Devil Hills, Nags Head, Oregon Inlet, and Hatteras. It is also very helpful to understand that towns, hotels, restaurants and attractions often designate their location relative to the closest "milepost" marker along the main road that runs the length of the islands.

When traveling south from Kill Devil Hills, right around Milepost 11, you will enter the **Nags Head** city limits. In the early


© 2000 HUNTER PUBLISHING, INC.
Kitty Hawk
Currituck Sound
To Duck, Sanderling & Corolla
Dogwood Dr.
Southern Shores
Duck Rd.
Wright Memorial Bridge
Fishing Pier
Welcome Center
Atlantic Ocean
Kitty Hawk Rd.
158
Virginia Dare Rd.
Sound Landing
Boat Ramp
Kitty Hawk Village
Shellbank Point
12
Kitty Hawk
Post Office
Long Point

1800s, Nags Head gained popularity as a resort when wealthy plantation owners forsook the heat and humidity farther inland in favor of the cool breezes of the Outer Banks. Before that, though, it was a place to steer clear of and quite dangerous, at least for mariners. "Wrecking," you see, was a popular pastime and source of income for the islands' inhabitants. One popular theory on how the area got its name suggests that, at night, local wreckers would tie glowing lanterns to horses' necks as they walked back and forth along the beach – hence, the name Nags Head. The bobbing lights, were mistaken for ships anchored safely in the harbor by sailors at sea, who would steer towards the seemingly peaceful scene. The ships would, of course, run aground, where they were easy pickings for the wily scavengers. The wreckers today are but a memory and peaceful Nags Head is one of the safest resorts along the East Coast.

While it would not be considered the most upmarket among Outer Banks' vacation spots, it is, perhaps the busiest. This seaside village is always full of tourists in season. It is a major center for recreation, where fishing, boating, surfing, and even hang gliding are yours to enjoy. For those interested in the arts – or the art of shopping – there are more galleries, art studios, shops, and stores concentrated in Nags Head than anywhere else on the Banks.

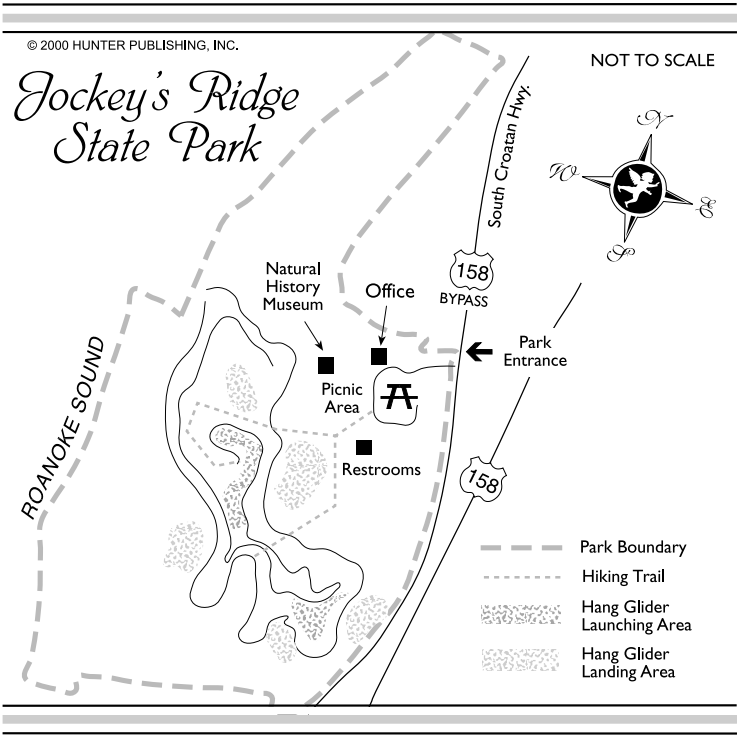
Normally, in a seaside environment such as this, maritime escapades would be first on the list of things to do. However, in an area famous for the site of man's first powered flight, what could be more appropriate than taking to the air yourselves on an air tour that departs from that very same spot. For just $58 a couple, **Kitty Hawk Aero Tours**, ☎ 252-441-4460, will whisk you aloft from the airstrip at the Wright Brothers Monument for an informative 25-minute, 50-mile tour. You will soar over land and water, enjoying spectacular views of sea creatures, shipwrecks, lighthouses and Jockey's Ridge. At the same time you will become better acquainted with the unusual geographical features of the Outer Banks. Upon landing, your pilot will present you with a signed First Flight Certificate in commemoration of your lofty adventure.

Coming back down to earth, you will surely want to further investigate just how the Wright Brothers managed their amazing feat on December 17, 1903. The Visitor Center at **Wright Brothers National Memorial**, ☎ 252-441-7430, relates the full story of the Wright Brothers through exhibits and full-scale reproductions of their 1902 glider and 1903 flying machine. Nearby are two reconstructed 1903 camp buildings, one of which duplicates the one used as a hangar and the other reminiscent of, and furnished much like, Orville's and Wilbur's workshop and living quarters. A large granite boulder marks the spot where the first craft left the ground, while numbered markers indicate the distance of each of the four flights taken on that momentous day. The Wright Brothers National Memorial, easily spotted and dominated by a massive granite monument on the crest of a 90-foot-high sand dune, is open daily from 9 am to 6 pm in the summer, closing an hour earlier during other seasons.

Just a half-mile south of the Wright National Monument near Milepost 8 is a narrow road that runs west leads to the heavily wooded and very pretty **Colington Island**, one of the lesser-known attractions on the Outer Banks. In 1665, this site was colonized by English settlers under the leadership of Peter Carteret, thus becoming the first permanent settlement on the Outer Banks. The five-mile drive into Colington is scenic indeed – a photographer's dream, passing over old arched bridges and through forests of holly, oak and pine as it winds its way to the shores of the sound. Once you arrive, you will enjoy beautiful countryside and peace and quiet.

Our Suggestion: Colington Island is an ideal spot for a picnic lunch. So, before leaving, pack a hamper, tucking in a bottle of your favorite wine, and plan for an afternoon of rest and relaxation.

A bit farther south is the 414-acre **Jockey's Ridge State Park**, ☎ 252-441-7132 or fax 441-8416, just off South Croatan Highway, Highway 158 Bypass, at Milepost 12. This is home to the tallest natural sand dune system in the Eastern United



States, 80 to 100 feet above sea level depending upon weather conditions, and with dune peaks up to 140 feet high. Jockey's Ridge, is, technically speaking, a "medano" – a huge hill of shifting sand that lacks vegetation. Maritime winds, from differing directions, are constantly changing both the shape and the size of the dune. Intriguingly, the reason it doesn't blow away completely is that prevailing winds in summer and winter come from exactly opposite directions, constantly blowing the sand back and forth. Still, the ridge is moving very slowly in the direction of the stronger winds, most recently overtaking a miniature golf course, purchased by the state so that the natural movement of the dunes could continue unobstructed. In fact, during winter months, the gusty winds often uncover turrets of the cement castle that, not so long ago, reigned over the putt-putt. Best then to be careful.

Hiking on this huge pile of sand, perhaps along the self-guided 1½-mile Tracks in the Sand Trail, can be a lot of fun. Remember, though, to wear properly protective shoes because the sand temperature can be as much as 30° higher than the air temperature. If you make it to the top you will have a glorious view over the sand and Roanoke Sound; on a clear day, though you can't see forever, you can see for miles, both to the north and south, along the Outer Banks.

When on the dunes keep an eye out for the little glass tubes formed when lightning hits the sand. But don't remove from them from the park. These are called "fulgurites," named for the Roman goddess Fulgera.

Be aware that this park is highly exposed to lightning during thunderstorms.

Very recently, the park opened a Visitor Center and Museum with informative exhibits on sand and sand movement; and a variety of programs, including Star-Gazing, Kite Building and Bird-Watching are offered throughout the year. The park opens at 8 am year-round, closing at 6 pm between November and February, 7 pm in March and October, 8 pm in April, May and September and 9 pm, June through August.

Among the more colorful and intriguing sights along the Outer Banks is the host of hang gliders that float gracefully upon the currents above Jockey's Ridge. Gusty winds and a naturally soft landing field of sand make conditions ideal for the sport, even for first timers. In fact, each May the Annual Hang Gliding Spectacular, the oldest continuous hang gliding competition in the US, is held in this park. Those of you adventurous enough to try it yourselves will not have far to travel for assistance and the proper equipment. **Kitty Hawk Kites**, ☎ 252-441-4124, 800-334-4777, fax 441-7597, e-mail catalog@kittyhawk.com and www.kittyhawk.com, maintains its main store and flight center at Milepost 13, Jockey's Ridge. In addition to a complete range of dune hang gliding packages and experiences, they offer comprehensive opportunities for

paragliding, aerotowing and boat-tows. Kayaking is another of their specialties; also offered are a range of guided Kayak Eco-Tours and Sunset Tours, instruction in kayaking and sailing, and bare boat rentals. The folks at Kitty Hawk Kites accommodate landlubbers, too, with biking tours or bike rentals, in-line skate lessons and rentals and climbing on two indoor walls, one outdoor wall and a portable wall. Kiting, as you will have noticed, is also a popular pastime on these windy shores; and, as the name implies, this company offers kite-making workshops and demonstrations. If you take a permanent shine to any one of these sports, equipment is for sale or for rent, alongside a full range of goods from shirts to sailboats, including such novelties as windsocks, spinners and banners, boomerangs, the ever popular yo-yo and stunt kites.

Kitty Hawk Kites operates other stores – some in conjunction with **Carolina Outdoors** – at the following locations: Kitty Hawk Kites at Corolla, ☎ 252-453-8845, Currituck Airport, ☎ 252-453-3540 and Duck, ☎ 252-261-4450; Kitty Hawk Kites & Carolina Outdoors at Avon, ☎ 252-995-6060; and Carolina Outdoors at Corolla, ☎ 252-453-3685, Hatteras and Manteo, ☎ 252-473-2357. The range of adventures offered at these other stores, however, is less comprehensive than at the parent store, and varies from location to location.

With bike or skates in hand, head for **Roanoke Island Festival Park** (discussed in detail below) where you can pick up a trail map of the recently opened Roanoke Voyages Trail. Designed with joggers, walkers, bikers and skaters in mind, it runs for seven miles from bridge to bridge, linking all the major attractions.

While on the subject of land adventures, few will realize that the Northern Outer Banks area, on the dunes in the off-road area north of Corolla, is home to wild Spanish mustangs who have survived over 400 years of inclement weather and poor food to roam free on these beaches. The best way to see and learn about these magnificent creatures is through **Corolla Outback Adventures**, ☎ 252-453-0877, or www.corollaoutback.com, next to the Corolla Post Office at Wink. A four-wheel-drive, two-hour Wild Horse Safari, priced

at $39 per person, winds through the petrified forest, Penny's Hill, and the canals of Carova. As you learn of area legends, you may be lucky enough to observe local wildlife such as whitetail deer, goats and, possibly, wild boar. Other adventures include a three-hour combination four-wheel-drive/kayak expedition for $49 per person, a two-hour paddling excursion into the salt marsh eco-zone in Whalehead Bay at $34 per person, and a 20-mile guided adventure to Carova Beach and back behind the wheel of an ATV for $45 per person.

Four-wheel-drive vehicles are more than useful and especially fun in this part of the world. You can join in such adventures through a visit to **Midgette Auto Sales, Inc.**, ☎ 252-491-8500, 800-685-9938 (out-of-state-only) and fax 491-2169, just one mile north of the Wright Memorial Bridge, on the side heading to the beach at Harbinger. Here, a 4X4 rents for $89.95 a day, plus insurance, collision insurance and tax. The rate allows 100 free miles a day, with extra miles charged at 20¢ per mile.

It is little wonder that fishing is so popular in the Outer Banks. Over half of Dare County's 800 square miles consists of water, in the form of open sea, sheltered coves and five sounds. And, the Gulf Stream begins just 20 to 30 miles offshore, depending upon weather conditions and season. Only in Florida does it come closer to the coast. More than half of the state's saltwater fishing records have been set in the waters of the Outer Banks, judged one of the premier fishing spots in the world. It is considered "The Billfish Capital of the World." Some of these giants can weigh up to 1,000 lbs. In addition, blue marlin, white marlin, sailfish, yellowfin tuna, dolphin, wahoo, king mackerel, big bluefish, Taylor bluefish and Spanish mackerel all appear in these waters and make for fantastic sport fishing.

If you are looking to catch the really big ones, set a course for **Oregon Inlet Fishing Center**, ☎ 252-441-6301, 800-272-5199, e-mail oregon-inlet@outer-banks.com,, www.oregon-inlet.com. It's in Manteo, eight miles south of Whalebone Junction on NC 12, at the north end of the Oregon Inlet Bridge. Here you'll find the largest and most modern fishing fleet on the Eastern Seaboard, with 34 vessels going offshore and four

working the inshore waters. Reservations are arranged at the booking desk, by telephone or by letter. A full party consists of six, but parties of less than six can usually be combined with other fishermen to make a full crew (although this is not guaranteed). Offshore rates for a full day, 5:30 am to 4 pm, are $980; full-day inlet/sound fishing, 7 am to 3:30 pm, costs $594; and a half-day inlet/sound trip, from 7 to 11:30 am or afternoon from midday to 4:30 pm, costs $336. All rates include tackle, lures and bait, but you must bring your own food and drink. Photographers and a taxidermist service are on hand to record for posterity your big catch, but if you get really lucky and catch one like what you'll see in the parking lot's display case, you had better have a deep wallet and a long, empty wall! If you have no plans to go fishing, a trip here around 4 pm in the afternoon is an experience in itself. There is a sense of expectancy in the air as the first of the fleet returns to dock and crews begin to unload their catch of monstrous, iridescent fish. It is a sight not easily forgotten. Few will resist taking home a souvenir from the well-stocked shop – the more popular items being Oregon Inlet Fishing Center T-shirts and hats.

If fly-fishing and light tackle charters are more to your liking, the specialist in Nags Head is USCG Licensed Captain Bryan Dehart, who runs the **Coastal Adventure Guide Service**, ☎ 252-473-1575, 141 Brakewood Drive, Manteo, NC 27954. Bryan, born and raised in Manteo, comes from a line of local fishermen. His grandfather was one of the first to run a hook and line charter trip out of Oregon Inlet shortly after the turn of the century. As you can imagine, Bryan knows the intricacies of area lakes, rivers and sounds, including just where to take you for a safe and rewarding fishing trip. A committed naturalist he will take particular delight in sharing the natural history of the region with you. He has caught and documented over 50 species of game fish, but he prefers to share with clients the joys and intricacies of his favorite – fly-fishing. Striped bass (rockfish) are at their peak in the Roanoke River during April and May, are found the rest of the year in the sounds and inlets, and reach up to 30 lbs. Speckled trout (spotted sea trout), weighing up to six lbs., are around all summer, with peak sea-

sons being early spring and fall. The state saltwater fish, red drum (aka puppy drum), spot-tail bass and redfish are caught all summer with a peak in early fall. They routinely weigh in at around 40 lb. The largest summertime population of adult tarpon (silver king) on the East Coast populate the Pamlico Sound in July and August. Finally, those visiting later in the year will be likely to hook fat albacore (fat alberts) which peak October through November. Trip prices, for one or two people, are $200 for a half-day and $350 for a full day; they include everything you need except food and drink. If you are in Nags Head in October and November then you might want to consider a really mixed bag. Captain DeHart also conducts fall duck hunting trips, and, for a total of $350, he will take both of you on a morning, 4:30 am to 10:30 am, duck hunt and an afternoon, 1 pm to sunset, fishing trip. Indeed, he is the only one in the area to offer such a blast and cast combination. If only the duck hunting takes your fancy, that will cost $125 per person, with a minimum of $250.

Those just wanting to try their luck at saltwater fishing along the Outer Banks have the option of surf casting from the beach or wrangling a spot on one of the numerous fishing piers along the coast. Licenses aren't required for salt-water fishing, but, if you need tackle, there is a shop we recommend to romantic weekenders. Recognizing that not all ladies are fisherwomen but that they do often accompany their men folk to the shop, the management of **Capt. Marty's**, ☎ 252-441-3132, 1800 MARTYS-9, fax 441-3841 and http://www.captmartys.com, does their best to make them feel welcome. The refreshingly light and spacious 5,700-square-foot modern store is across from the Outer Banks Mall at 5151 South Croatan Highway, Milepost 14½, Nags Head, and has a "ladies' corner" with fireplace, easy chairs, magazines and coffee. It is the men and sports-minded ladies, though, that will be in their element here. The range of fishing and hunting supplies is comprehensive and the staff is friendly and helpful. They will assist you in building a custom rod, give you hands-on instruction in bait rigging and, if you call ahead, custom-rig your offshore baits. What's more, if you catch a few keepers, Capt. Marty's has a

rental freezer locker where you can keep your prizes fresh until your trip back home.

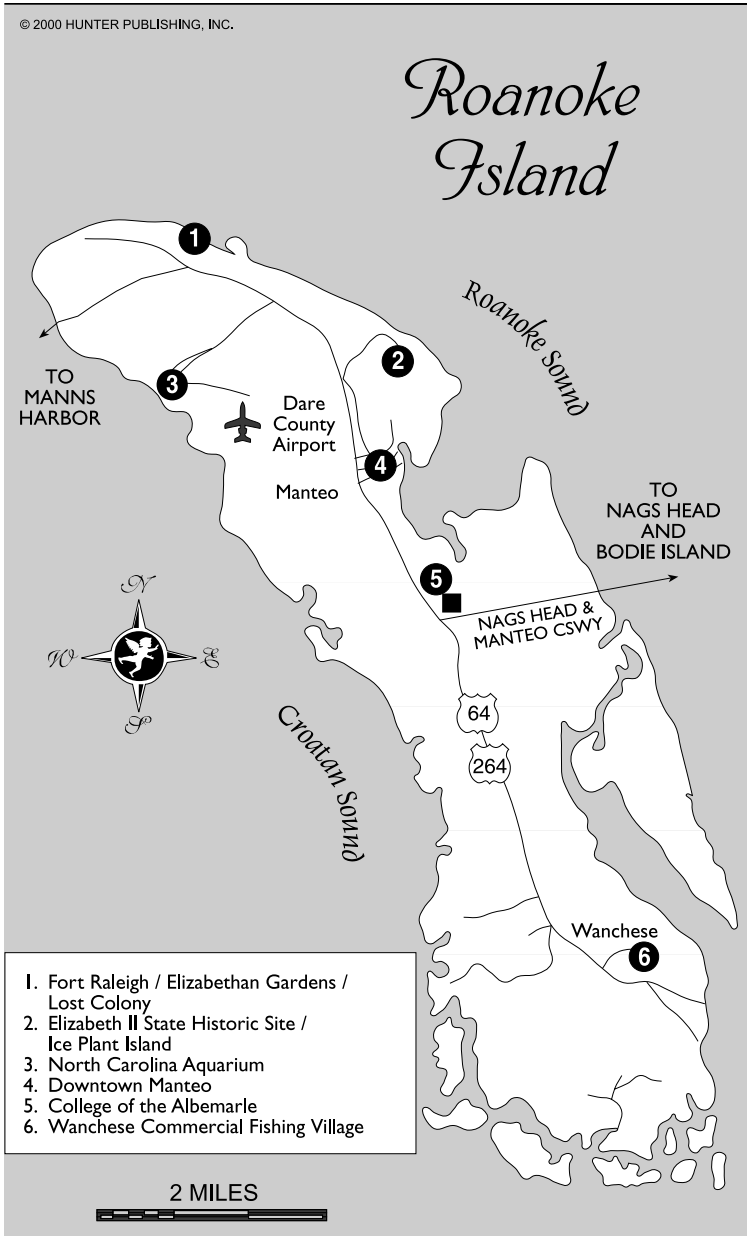
Guided canoe trips can be a fascinating experience, especially in an area so rich in nature. The owner/operator of **Wilderness Canoeing**, ☎ 252-473-1960, PO Box 789, Manteo, NC 27954, Melvin T. Twiddy, Jr., has many years of experience leading trips and knows all the best spots. For $39 per person, he will take you on a 3½- to four-hour excursion through, among other places, the Alligator River Wildlife Refuge and Sawyer Lake. As the sounds of civilization give way to the sounds of the wilderness, you will get an up close and personal look at such creatures as alligators, beavers, reptiles and other amphibians, black bear, red wolves, deer, and a plethora of exotic birds, including bald eagles, osprey, wood ducks, and pileated and red cockaded woodpeckers. The variety of trees and plant life, too, is stunning, especially when dressed in their glorious fall colors.

A less energetic and more relaxing maritime experience is a cruise on the ***Downeast Rover***, ☎ 252-473-4866. This 55-foot modern reproduction in steel of a traditional topsail schooner sets sail, in season, from the Manteo waterfront for two-hour cruises at 11 am and 2 pm and for an extended Sunset Cruise at 6:30 pm. Once out on the Roanoke Sound you will delight in the cavorting of dolphins, the ethereally graceful movements of herons, and will see numerous other species of birds. Would-be sailors may assist in trimming the mighty sails or take a turn at the wheel. Others may simply sit back, relax and enjoy these historical waters. The price is $20 per person and, although sodas and snacks are available for sale on board, passengers are encouraged to bring along with them whatever they wish to eat and drink, including alcoholic beverages.

Visitors to the Outer Banks are not alone in their fascination with the dolphin population. Research teams track the creatures up and down the coast, keeping a record of their numbers and travels. Most of these teams rely upon government funding and grants to continue their research – a touchy proposition. One enterprising couple, however, with a passion to document the dolphin population along the Outer Banks

where no funding was available, has devised and put into operation an innovative plan to fund their research, educate the public and provide an interesting excursion for visitors to the Nags Head area. Captain Rich Mallan-Day and his first mate in life as well as on board, Kate, putting their personal finances on the line, purchased a 40-foot covered pontoon boat and began taking paying passengers along on their daily research outings. What has evolved is **Nags Head Dolphin Watch**, ☎ 252) 449-8999, www.dolphin-watch.com, based at Willett's Wetsports on the Causeway beside Caribbean Corners. They offer three trips daily between Memorial Day – when the dolphins are just arriving – and the end of September, when the dolphins migrate south to Beaufort, NC. These tours are fun and absolutely fascinating! You will learn from those that know them best about the dolphins' feeding and social habits as they frolic around the boat in their natural habitat. You will learn about the unique way dolphins sleep and that most dolphins are easily recognized by the unique markings on their dorsal fins. You'll make the acquaintance of such local dolphins as "Onion," "Butterfly," and "Scarlet," with her calf "S-scar-go." You may even be able to participate in one or more of the ongoing studies. Other wildlife, such as ospreys and pelicans, will probably put in an appearance as well and Captain Rich and Kate will provide an in-depth and entertaining commentary on local ecology and history. We think you will agree that this is an opportunity too good to pass up – see the dolphins and help them at the same time. Just after Memorial Day, when sightings are likely but less frequent, the cost is $15 person. For the balance of the season, the cost increases to $20 per person. As these trips have become highly popular, we suggest that you book your spot well in advance.

Kathy's Suggestion: Once you return home, keep up with the team's progress and the antics of your favorite dolphins by surfing on over to their website at www.dolphin-watch.com, where Rich and Kate post dolphin sightings and other research information.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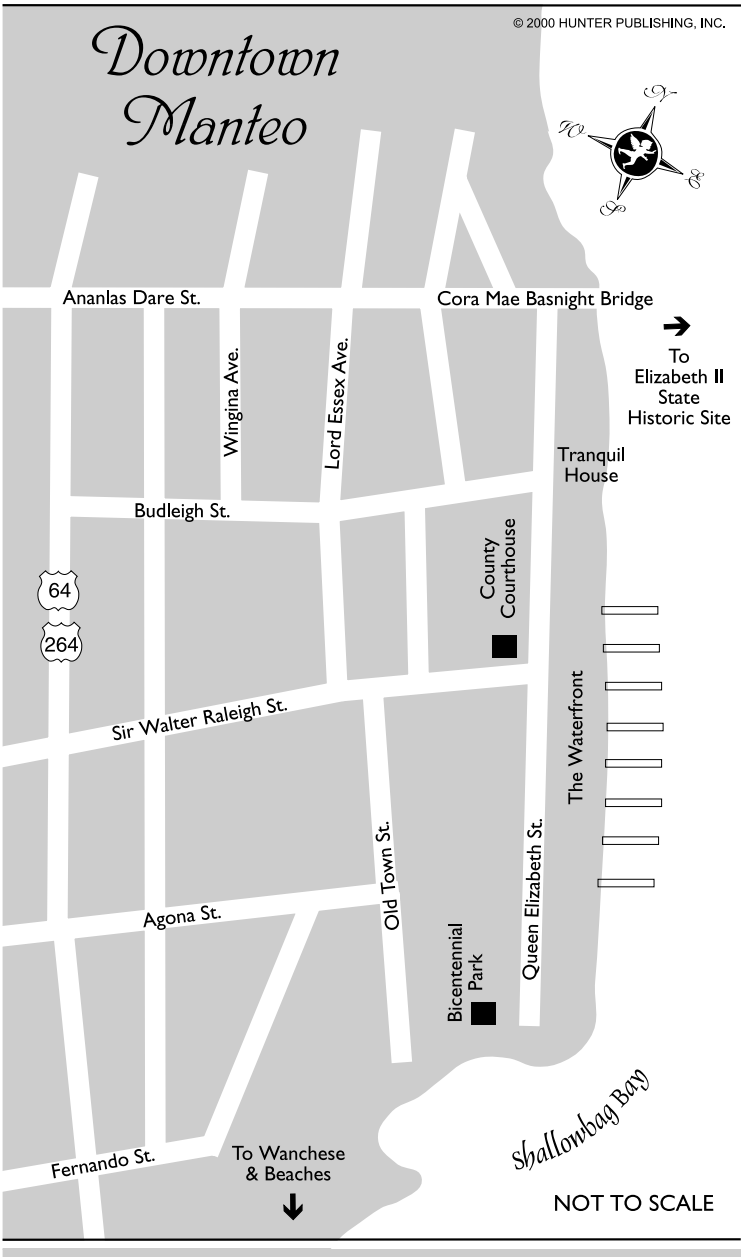
Roanoke Island
Roanoke Sound
TO MANNS HARBOR
Dare County Airport
Manteo
TO NAGS HEAD AND BODIE ISLAND
NAGS HEAD & MANTEO CSWY
64
264
Croatan Sound
Wanchese
1. Fort Raleigh / Elizabethan Gardens / Lost Colony
2. Elizabeth II State Historic Site / Ice Plant Island
3. North Carolina Aquarium
4. Downtown Manteo
5. College of the Albemarle
6. Wanchese Commercial Fishing Village
2 MILES

The Lost Colony

No summertime visit to the Outer Banks would be complete without taking in The Lost Colony, a symphonic outdoor drama that vibrantly recounts the story of the 120 English settlers who made their homes at Fort Raleigh in the summer of 1587 and disappeared sometime before John White's return in 1590. In 1998, the play celebrated its 61st year with a revamping of the production and a $2.5 million renovation of the historic Waterside Theater.

The drama grew out of the frustrations of several Roanoke Island citizens seeking to refute the historical fallacy that Jamestown and Plymouth were America's first English settlements. Their first efforts resulted in a 1921 vintage silent film which told the story of the Roanoke Voyages of 1585-87. By 1934, the newly-formed Roanoke Island Historical Association had ambitious plans for a pageant to commemorate the 350th birthday of Virginia Dare, the first English child born in the New World. They commissioned native North Carolinian and Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright, Paul Green, to pen the script and began construction of an outdoor theater near the site of the ill-fated colony. Green created a masterpiece of innovative theater, bringing the tragic tale to life through a cleverly woven tapestry of music, dance and high drama. On July 4, 1937, the show debuted beneath the stars in the Waterside Amphitheater with two performances to over 8,000 patrons. The production has gone on to write its own chapter in the history of Roanoke Island. Surviving the economic depression, fire, hurricanes, war and financial challenges, the *Lost Colony* has played each summer season up to the present (except for a three-year suspension during World War II). Over 3½ million people have now seen the show. Of this phenomenon, the current director, the esteemed Drew Scott Harris, says: "This is a story of human values. Courage, compassion, survival, these are things that never go out of style."

Today's patrons, enjoying the comforts afforded by the recent renovation, will be enthralled as over 125 actors, singers, dancers and technicians tell the story of history's most enduring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Downtown Manteo
Ananlas Dare St.
Cora Mae Basnight Bridge
To Elizabeth II State Historic Site
Wingina Ave.
Lord Essex Ave.
Tranquil House
Budleigh St.
County Courthouse
64
264
Sir Walter Raleigh St.
The Waterfront
Old Town St.
Queen Elizabeth St.
Agona St.
Bicentennial Park
Shallowbag Bay
Fernando St.
To Wanchese & Beaches
NOT TO SCALE

and endearing mystery in a living memorial to Sir Walter Raleigh's lost colonists.

Performances are given Sunday through Friday at 8:30, mid-June through late August. Tickets are $18 for Producers Circle seats, $16 for adults, and $8 for children under 12, with additional discounts offered on Sunday nights. Reservations are required and may be made by calling ☎ 252-473-3414 or 800-488-5012, by e-mail at lstclny@interpath.com or by writing 1409 Highway 64/264, Roanoke Island, NC 27954. Or visit their website at www.thelostcolony.org. Don't be concerned if it rains; your ticket becomes a "rain check" exchangeable for another performance in the same year or in subsequent years. For a really special treat, inquire about Tea with the Queen, a special package held on selected nights which includes a formal backstage tour, sumptuous dessert and tea, an audience with Queen Elizabeth I (the actress!) and Producer's Circle tickets to the show.

Our Suggestion: Take along some insect repellent or purchase a packet of insect repellent wipes at the concession stand. Nothing will detract from the performance quicker than the mosquitoes that come to feast on the patrons. In fact, one wag has theorized that the disappearance of the colonists came about when they were carried off by gigantic mosquitoes.

Fort Raleigh

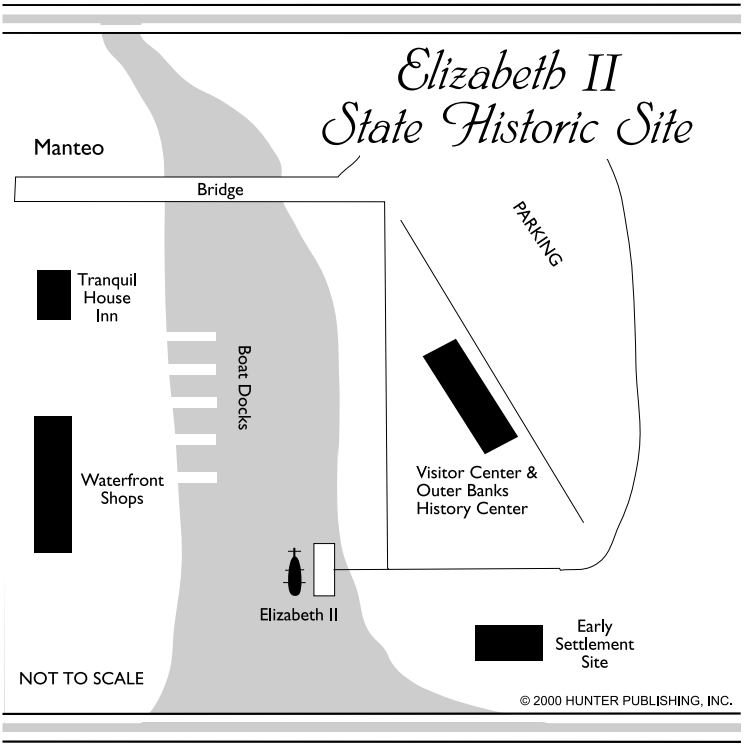
Adjacent to the theater complex on the north end of Roanoke Island, off Route 64/264, is the 150-acre **Fort Raleigh National Historic Site**, ☎ 252-473-5772. The site has a reconstruction of the earthen fort, reached by way of gentle pathways, a Visitor's Center that houses exhibits on the Lost Colony and Elizabethan England, a gift shop, and a theater showing an informative film on the colonya. Ranger-led talks are given on such topics as Indian customs. Admission is free.

The Elizabethan Gardens

Next door are the Elizabethan Gardens, created by the Garden Club of North Carolina as a memorial to the lost English colonists. Opened in 1960, the beautiful and peaceful garden paradise, designed by Innocenti and Webel and created through the largest garden club project in the country, fittingly graces the grounds hallowed by locals as the birthplace of America. Passing through the Great Gate and continuing past the Gate House at the entrance, you can stroll, sit or wile away hour after peaceful hour amid the beauty of the azaleas, dogwoods, rhododendrons, gardenias, roses, magnolias, crepe myrtles, lilies, hydrangeas, hibiscus, chrysanthemums, impatiens and a variety of herbs, bulbs and annuals in such tranquil garden settings as the Mount and Well Head, the Sunken Garden, and the Queen's Rose Garden. What could be more relaxing or more romantic? The gardens are open from 9 am to 5 pm daily, with closing extended until 8 pm when *The Lost Colony* is playing. Admission is nominal and there is no charge for children under 12. For more information, ☎ 252-473-3234.

Roanoke Island Festival Park

History lovers will also want to check out Roanoke Island Festival Park. Located directly opposite the Manteo waterfront on an island within an island, this exciting art and history complex is worth exploring. Tickets and information on park exhibits are available at the Arrival Center. The highlight, unquestionably, is the *Elizabeth II*, a reproduction of a three-masted bark like those used by the colonists of 1586 to cross from England to the New World. You will likely be surprised, as we were, by its small size – just 69 feet long and 17 feet wide. She was rated in 1586 as a 50-tunne ship, when the average merchant ship was 125 tunnes, an English warship might go as high as 800 tunnes, and a Spanish galleon was considerably more. The *Elizabeth II* was small then, by any standards, and a voyage of several months across seas that seemed to stretch on forever must have been a harrowing experience. Guides and interpreters dressed in Elizabethan costume will tell you just how harrowing as they escort you about the ship and discuss



the lifestyles of her passengers. Other noteworthy attractions at the park are a 230-seat theater showing *The Legend of Two Path*, a film that depicts the first encounter with the English from a Native American perspective; an 8,500-square-foot hall with an array of historical, cultural, economic and natural interactive exhibits; and an outdoor pavilion that seats 3,500 and offers such diverse presentations as one-act plays, Shakespearean dramas, dance recitals, concerts, from jazz to symphonic, country music or R&B shows, and vaudeville-style reviews. Open Tuesday through Sunday, the hours from April to October are 10 am to 6 pm; the remainder of the year, it's 10 am to 4 pm. Admission for adults is $3 and for children 6-12, $1.50. For more information, ☎ 252-473-1144.

Kill Devil Hills
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To
Kitty
Hawk
Avalon
Fishing
Pier
Avalon Drive
Kitty Hawk Bay
Police /
Fire Station
Virginia Dare Highway
Wright
Memorial
158
BR
Air
Strip
Ocean
Bay
Blvd.
Colington Island
Colington Rd.
Colington Creek
Outer Banks
Chamber
of Commerce
& Welcome Center
12
Post
Office
To
Nags
Head
Atlantic Ocean
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The Graveyard of the Atlantic

Finally, turn your attention to two interesting phenomena, both unique to the Outer Banks and described in some detail in the brochure "Lighthouses & Shipwrecks Along the Outer Banks" produced by the Dare County Tourist Bureau.

The waters along the Outer Banks were regarded by early mariners as among the most treacherous in the world. From the time of the first European explorers to the present, over 2,000 ships, have fallen prey to storm-driven waters and shifting sands and found their final resting-place in this, the "Graveyard of the Atlantic." Among these, the most famous is the *USS Monitor*, the iron-clad Civil War vessel sunk in 1862, rediscovered in 1973, and credited with ushering in our present age of naval warfare. You will learn from the brochure that a number of shipwrecks are visible at low tide and still others are or on display at various locations. If this subject intrigues you, we would suggest you pay a visit to Hatteras' newly opened museum, **The Graveyard of the Atlantic**, dedicated to the preservation, interpretation and understanding of shipwrecks and maritime history through multimedia presentations and exhibits. The museum is adjacent to the Hatteras-Ocracoke Ferry Terminal and US Coast Guard base at the south end of the village. For information ☎ 252-986-2995.

Lighthouses

In 1789, in an effort to make safer the eastern shore of this fledgling nation, President George Washington and Congress passed legislation to establish buoys, lighthouses and other warning devices along the coastlines of the 13 original states. Of these, **Cape Hatteras**, **Bodie Island**, **Ocracoke** and **Currituck lighthouses** were constructed along the Outer Banks. Overseeing the preservation of these towering sentinels today, in conjunction with the National Park Service, is the **Outer Banks Lighthouse Society**, PO Box 305, Kill Devil Hills, NC 27948, ☎ 252-441-9928. The sites of all four lighthouses are open to the public; keeper's quarters at Hatteras, Bodie, and Currituck house small museums and

shops; and Hatteras and Currituck, weather permitting, are open for climbing. Interestingly, the Hatteras lighthouse was moved, albeit very slowly indeed, from its endangered position to a new, safer, one in the summer of 1999. For opening hours, contact the National Park Service at ☎ 252-473-2111.

Special Events

A variety of special events are scheduled at different spots along the Outer Banks throughout the year. Some of the highlights are listed here. In May, Hatteras hosts the annual **Hatteras Village Offshore Open Billfish and Gamefish Tournament**. Also in May, the annual **Hang-Gliding Spectacular and Air Games** are held at Jockey's Ridge State Park. The year 2000 marks the 28th anniversary of this event, the oldest continuous hang-gliding competition in the country. In June, Jockey's Ridge hosts the annual **Rogallo Kite Festival**, honoring Francis M. Rogallo, inventor of the "Flexible Wing Flyer." For over 17 years, the annual **Wanchese Seafood Festival** has been a favorite for locals and visitors alike. A variety of fun-filled activities are scheduled around the July 4th holiday, including the **Independence Day Fireworks Display** at the Ferry Docks in Hatteras and, later in the week, the annual **Best Body on the Beach Contest**. The annual **Pirate's Cove Billfish Tournament** is held in August, as is the **Virginia Dare Birthday Celebration**, a day-long series of special events sponsored by the National Park Service, which culminates with the Virginia Dare Night Performance of *The Lost Colony*. **National Aviation Day** is celebrated in August at the Wright Brothers' Monument. In September, the Weeping Radish Brewery & Bavarian Restaurant in Manteo hosts the annual **Weeping Radish Oktoberfest**, complete with German oompah band. Celebrating its 50th anniversary in the year 2000 will be the annual **Nags Head Surf Fishing Club Invitational Tournament**. The Christmas holidays are celebrated by the **Lighting of the Town Tree** with caroling, Yule log, cake and hot chocolate on the waterfront on Manteo; **Kites With Lights**, when you can watch the antics of

lit stunt kites, sing carols and snack on hot cider and cookies at Jockey's Ridge State Park; and the annual **Anniversary of the First Flight**, at the Wright Brothers' Memorial.

Visitor Centers

There are so many exciting things to do along the Outer Banks, we would suggest contacting, ahead of your visit, the **Dare County Tourist Bureau**, ☎ 252-473-2138, 877-BY-THE-SEA (298-4373), e-mail dctb-info@outer-banks.com and www.outer-banks.com/visitor-info. Once in the Outer Banks, The **Aycock Brown/Outer Banks Visitor Center**, Milepost 1½ and the **Kitty Hawk and Dare County Tourist Bureau**, Highway 64/264, Mateo, are open year-round. In addition, the **Nags Head Visitor Center** at Whalebone, at the northern entrance of the Cape Hatteras National Seashore, and the **Roanoke Island Visitor Center** at Fort Raleigh, located on Highway 64/264 on the north end of Roanoke Island, are open between April and October.

Sweet Dreams

Corolla

The **Inn at Corolla Light**, ☎ 252-453-3340, 800-215-0772, fax 453-6947, e-mail the-inn@outer-banks.com, www.corollainn.com, 1066 Ocean Trail, Corolla. This place has a delightful location nestled beside Currituck Sound. Each of the 41 guest rooms or suites is luxuriously appointed with either a king-sized or two queen-sized beds, refrigerator, TV, video player, AM/FM radio, and coffeemaker. Many feature a fully equipped kitchenette and dining facilities. All waterfront rooms and suites have a gas fireplace; some also have a whirlpool tub, sitting rooms and/or a deck. Garden view rooms have similar facilities.

Prices vary according to season – of which there are three – classification of the room and view. They range from $85 to $295 per night, single- or double-occupancy. This includes a Continental breakfast and use of all Corolla Light amenities, such as bicycles. There is a two-night minimum on most weekends and a three-night minimum for a few peak off-season non-holiday weekends. The inn has a private pool and hot tub overlooking peaceful Currituck Sound, and a 400-foot sailing pier. In summer, from the gazebo at the pier's end, guests may rent wave runners, kayaks, paddleboats, pontoon boats, and other watercraft. It also serves as a good spot for crabbing, or simply relaxing. Other outdoor facilities include seven outdoor tennis courts, two oceanfront pools, a grass putting course, and walking and biking trails. Indoors, there is a sports center with competition pool, hot tub and saunas, racketball and volleyball courts, exercise room, tennis pro instruction and aerobics.

Duck

The **Sanderling Inn Resort and Conference Center**, ☎ 252-261-4111, 800-701-4111, fax 261-1638, e-mail sanderlinginn@outer-banks.com, is at 1461 Duck Road, Duck. Their website is www.outer-banks.com/sanderling. This is actually five miles north of the town of Duck at the narrowest point between the Atlantic Ocean and Currituck Sound. This 12-acre private resort is comprised of three inns which, combined, include 88 luxury rooms, a restaurant and bar housed in a restored 1899 coast guard lifesaving station, a fully equipped health club and one of the most extensive collections of fine wildlife art and sculpture in the country. The Main Inn, opened in 1985, blends the understated elegance of traditional Outer Banks architecture with spectacular antiques and artwork.

Each room/suite has a private porch, coffeemaker, refrigerator, microwave, TV with VCR, and a kitchenette. Second-floor habitations have good views of either the ocean or the sound, while first-floor rooms have clear views of the sound only. The North Inn, opened in 1988 and completely renovated in 1994, has comfortable rooms equipped with wet bars and microwaves, as well as luxuriously appointed studio suites which, in addition, have spacious porches and large baths with Jacuzzis. Again, second-floor rooms have good views of either the ocean or sound. The South Inn, opened in 1994, offers deluxe suites and all oceanfront and ocean view accommodations. Each room has refrigerator, wet bar, microwave and private porch. The suites have 1½ baths, a Jacuzzi and stereo system. A public gallery, which serves as a common area for residents, is dominated by a soaring sculpture of diving pelicans fashioned by Grainger McKoy, acclaimed South Carolina carver and outdoorsman.

Prices range from $123 to $504 a night for double-occupancy, depending on the season and type of room. Included are a Continental breakfast, newspapers, afternoon tea and use of the health club and pools. Tennis, massage and special programs are available for an extra charge. Savvy travelers will give careful consideration to the Romance Package. This offers two nights in luxury accommodations, breakfast one morning and a dinner for two one evening in the gourmet restaurant, champagne for two, and a special keepsake gift presented upon arrival. Prices for the "Value Season," January 1st through April 29th and October 31st through December 29th, start at $374 per couple, with "Peak Season" prices beginning at $610 per couple. Communal amenities here include the previously mentioned health club, with sliding glass doors and a retractable roof, which features indoor pool, four hard-surface tennis

courts, an indoor whirlpool with views of the sound, fully equipped exercise rooms, private saunas, and massage therapy. The Sanderling Inn Restaurant and Bar, located in a lovely building listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is noted for its elegant ambiance and imaginatively prepared cuisine.

Advice 5¢, a bed & breakfast, ☎ 252-255-1050, 800-ADVICE 5, e-mail advice@theouterbanks.com, www.theouterbanks.com/advice5, 111 Scarborough Lane, Duck. Located in the secluded and quiet neighborhood of Sea Pines, it is a conveniently short walk from Duck's shops and restaurants. Built in 1995, it offers a pleasant getaway in an atmosphere of casual simplicity. Each of the four guest rooms has private bath and deck, and one suite also offers a sitting area with cable TV and stereo, and a master bath featuring a Jacuzzi-style bathtub. There are two seasons, "Low Tide" – January 1st to April 30th and October 1st to December 31st – and "High Tide" – May 1st through September 30th. Room rates of $95 and $140, and suite rates of $120 and $175, respectively, include good morning coffee and tea, a baked-from-scratch breakfast, and afternoon tea. A minimum stay of two nights is preferred, with three nights required over most holiday periods; and we strongly encourage you to make reservations as far in advance as possible. Guests will also enjoy panoramic views from the Ship's Tower, the convenience of outdoor showers, the use of beach chairs and towels, access to the Sea Pines' swimming pool and tennis court, and a private walkway to the beach.

Nags Head Beach

The **Surf Side Motel**, ☎ 252-441-2105, 800-552-SURF, fax 441-2456, e-mail surfside@pinn.net, Milepost 16 on the Beach Road, Nags Head. With its wonderful oceanfront location, di-

rect access to the beach, and array of unusual room layouts, has been a long time favorite with our family. There are 76 well-appointed and brightly decorated guest rooms designated Standard, King Room, Loft Room, Efficiency and Honeymoon Suite with Jacuzzi, some of which feature a mini-refrigerator and microwave. The Honeymoon Suite with Jacuzzi is the most romantic for a couple. But if you are a romantically inclined couple traveling with children, the Loft Room offers a unique layout – designed for a family, but conducive to privacy. The main level consists of a bedroom/sitting room with full bath and balcony. Upstairs, by way of wooden stairs, is a balcony bedroom with double bed, chest of drawers and skylight. Adults, after tucking their children in for the night upstairs, can enjoy some private time together on the ocean view balcony or in the sitting room before retiring for the night downstairs. Rates here vary seasonally and range from $39 to $209 per night. Included in the tariff is a substantial Continental breakfast served in the breakfast room between 8 and 10 am, with a variety of hot and cold cereals, pastries and muffins, toast-them-yourself bagels and English muffins with all the trimmings, and a variety of beverages. An afternoon social hour with wines and light snacks is also complimentary from 4 to 6 pm. Amenities include an indoor pool and hot tub, and an outdoor pool with a southern exposure overlooking the beach.

The **First Colony Inn**, ☎ 252-441-2343, 800-368-9390 (reservations only between 8 am and 10 pm), fax 441-9234, e-mail innkeeper@firstcolonyinn.com, www.firstcolonyinn.com, 6720 South Virginia Dare Trail, Milepost 16, Nags Head. This is a AAA Four-Diamond-rated inn with a fascinating history. When first opened in 1932, during an era when Nags Head was considered “the summer capital of Albemarle Society,” the First

Colony Inn was considered the place to stay on the beach at Nags Head. By 1988, however, this distinctive structure with its wide two-story encircling verandas had fallen into a state of disrepair and was in danger of being swallowed up by the sea. It was saved that year through the efforts of the Lawrence family of Lexington, North Carolina who, overcoming myriad obstacles, had the structure literally cut into three pieces and reassembled some three miles to the south. A three-year period of rehabilitation ensued, during which the exterior was restored to its original appearance, the interior was completely renovated and appointed with traditional furnishings, and modern conveniences were unobtrusively added. Each of the 26 guest rooms has TV/VCR, telephone, refrigerator, air conditioning, and heated towel racks in the bathrooms. Luxury Rooms also have a wet bar or kitchenette, sitting room or private screened porch and, in some, a Jacuzzi tub. Look, also, for a well-stocked wooden beamed library and a private boardwalk leading to the beach. Rates here depend on the season and the type of room: A Rooms (first floor), B Rooms (third floor), C Rooms (second floor), and D Rooms (deluxe). In 1999, rates for A Rooms were $75, $110 and $150; for B Rooms, $100, $135 and $180; for C Rooms, $125, $160 and $210, and for D Rooms, $150, $185 and $240, depending on the season. Weekend and holiday night rates have a surcharge of $15, $20 or $25, again depending upon the season. All rates, though, are quoted for double-occupancy, include Continental breakfast and afternoon tea and exclude taxes and gratuities.

Our Suggestion: Pay an extra $60 for the Honeymoon Package, which entitles you to champagne, chocolates, six long-stemmed roses and a Continental breakfast delivered to your room on a silver tray the first morning.

The First Colony Inn is the sole surviving "beach-style" hotel at Nags Head and has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Roanoke Island

The **Tranquil House Inn**, ☎ 252-473-1404, 800-458-7069, fax 473-1526, e-mail djust1587@aol.com or www.1587.com, Queen Elizabeth Street. This is in quaint downtown Manteo, right on the waterfront and overlooking the sailboats bobbing on Shallowbag Bay. The original inn, constructed on this same site in 1885, catered to a sophisticated clientele from around the world. Fate intervened in the 1950s, however, when a fire destroyed the inn. The current structure was built to carry on the tradition in 1988. But don't expect conformity here, unless it's in the standards of service and hospitality. The innkeepers, Don and Lauri, are pleased to say that there is no such thing as a typical guest room at the Tranquil House Inn. In fact, they boast that each of the 25 rooms and two suites are as individual as their guests are. There are rooms with canopy beds, rooms with four-poster beds, rooms with queen-sized beds, rooms with king-sized beds, and mini-suites with cozy sitting areas. The variety of décors may include differing combinations of designer wall papers, custom-sewn comforters, hardwood floors, Oriental rugs, Berber carpets and dried flower arrangements, but each of the rooms has a private hand-tiled bath. Rates run between $79 and $69 per night, double-occupancy, according to the four seasons, and include full Continental breakfast each morning and a wine reception each evening. Add an extra $20 a night, though, during holidays. There is a gourmet restaurant, The 1587, on-site, and bicycles are provided gratis to assist in your exploration of the island. Many couples may prefer simply to relax on the ample deck space overlooking the Roanoke Sound.

The **White Doe Inn Bed & Breakfast**, ☎ 252-473-9851, 800-473-6091, fax 473-4708, e-mail whitedoe@interpath.com, www.whitedoeinn.com, 319 Sir Walter Raleigh Street, Manteo. This is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and has recently been awarded the AAA Three-Diamond rating. Set in the middle of this quaint village and just a short walk from the bustling waterfront, it was built as a turn-of-the-century residence for the Meekins family. As the family prospered, additions were made to the original structure, until, by

1910, it evolved into the Queen Anne-style house with wrap-around balconies that you see today.

Already one of the most photographed homes on the island, it underwent a total renovation in 1994 in which designers and workmen remained faithful to the Queen Anne style, making every effort to retain charm and character while including all modern amenities. It opened, shortly thereafter, as The White Doe Inn Bed & Breakfast. Innkeepers Bebe and Bob Woody have, between them, over 60 years of experience as National Park Rangers. They are continually making improvements and make no apologies about pampering their guests. There are seven rooms and one suite, each with its own personality and furnished with turn-of-the-century antiques, reproductions and special architectural features that complement the décor. Amenities include queen-sized European feather beds, bedside fireplaces, telephones, CD players with a selection of romantic CDs, luxurious Egyptian cotton bed and bath linens, private baths – some with two-person Jacuzzis – stocked with Scentphisticates natural bath products, and Godiva chocolates. Rates, per room/suite, range from $120 to $150 during the winter season, $130 to $180 during the spring and fall, and $145 to $195 during the summer. Suites rent for $170, $200 and $225 for the same seasons, respectively. A full breakfast, afternoon tea/coffee and off-street parking are complimentary. There is a two-night minimum stay on weekends and a three-night minimum on holiday weekends.

Our Suggestion: Spend an extra $75 and book the Romantic Interludes Honeymoon and Anniversary Package. This includes a bottle of house champagne, wine or sparkling cider; boxed chocolates; crackers and cheese and grapes; and seasonal flower arrangements.

Boxed lunches or picnic baskets can be ordered for a very reasonable price. And, if all that sightseeing and swimming leaves your limbs aching, then, subject to availability, a professionally trained and certified therapist will come in and give you and your loved one a therapeutic massage.

Tables for Two

Corolla

Northbanks, ☎ 252-453-3344, at the TimBuck II Shopping Center, Corolla, is a petite and very personal restaurant where the highest priority is placed on freshness of ingredients. Local and regional docks are scoured daily for prime fish and shellfish and nearby Wanchese, one of the largest fishing communities on the East Coast, offers a plentiful variety. Meat dishes feature hand-selected beef from the Allen Brothers in Chicago, and lamb and veal raised without supplemental hormones by Summerfield Farms in Culpeper, Virginia. You may have difficulty, though, settling on an appetizer from among such tempting choices as JK's Original Baby Back Ribs, a half-rack marinated with secret seasonings and grilled ($6.50); or grilled portobello mushroom, marinated, grilled and served with a Southwestern polenta cake and roasted red peppers ($5.95). If you fancy a salad, then the oyster and spinach salad – oysters topped with lemon dill sauce and spinach tossed with balsamic vinaigrette ($5.95) – is rather unusual. Entrées include fresh catch of the day; mixed grill – an ever-changing mix of fin, fowl or beef; whole Maine lobster; and lamb or veal, each at market prices. Alternatively, from the steamer you will find live Maine lobsters, oysters or little neck clams (½ dozen $4.95/one dozen $8.95), mussels (½ dozen $3.95/one dozen $5.95), spiced shrimp (½ lb. $8.95/one lb. $16.95), or snow crab legs (1 lb. $15.95). And, if more than one of these takes your fancy, go for the steamed platters. Primo Platter for Two includes a 1½-lb. lobster, a dozen little neck clams, and a dozen steamed mussels, served with vegetable of the day and red bliss potatoes ($39.95). Coastal Blend Platter for Two has one lb. of Alaskan snow crab

legs, a dozen little neck clams, and a dozen steamed mussels, served with vegetable of the day and red bliss potatoes ($31.95). Or there's a Build Your Own Platter, choosing any combination of the items from the steamer. Daily specials are chalked up on the board, and house wines at $3.75 a glass are from Georges Duboeuf. Northbanks Restaurant is open daily for lunch, 11:30 am to 3:30 pm, and for dinner from 5 pm to closing.

Steamer's Shellfish To Go, ☎ 252-453-3305 or fax 453-0879, 798-B Sunset Boulevard, TimBuck II Soundside, Corolla, offers unique options for a gourmet take-out meal or snack, or for purchasing a customized Steamer Pot to enjoy once back home. Savory soups and salads, entrées and side dishes, lunch specials and desserts are available for a romantic picnic. Better still, Individual Steamer Pots, priced at $4.95 per person, come with freshly cooked corn on the cob, red bliss potatoes, yellow onion, Steamer's cocktail sauce, melted butter, lemons, and claw crackers. You then add seafood of your choosing – Maine lobster (market price), little neck clams (½ dozen $3.95/dozen $6.95), mussels (½ dozen $2.95/dozen $4.95), snow crab legs ($13.95 lb.) or jumbo king crab ($16.95 lb.), to complete the meal. Alternatively, order from a selection of Classic Steamer Pot Combos ($14.95 to $24.95 per person), designed for final preparation at home, where all you do is add water and steam.

Sorrel Pacific Cuisine, ☎ 252-453-6979, www.sorrels.com, TimBuck II Soundside, is an intimate, no-smoking restaurant with a limited number of outdoor patio tables and a sound view. Most enjoyable also is the bar, the Tiki Tavern, where sushi is prepared; it offers frozen island drinks, either non-alcoholic or made with wine-based liquor, and a supply of Pacific beers.

The owners, Jamie and Jennifer Spence, are an interesting couple indeed. On the culinary front, Jamie is mostly French-trained, although it is Jennifer's interest in Hawaiian cuisine that brings a unique flavor to Sorrel. Dishes reflect a variety of influences – Japanese, Thai, Polynesian, Australian, New Zealand, and South and North American, prepared with East-West fusion cooking techniques. "Creative Starts" include Crispy Asian Vegetable Spring Rolls, Chinese-style, filled with

julienne vegetables, flavored with a sweet chili and lime duck sauce ($5.95); Corn, Crab & Pepper Fritters, inspired by an Indonesian street food snack, served with plum and honey mustard sauce; or Sesame Fried Tuna Bites, pieces of tuna coated in sesame seeds and served with a Japanese wasabi aïoli (each $6.95). "Signature Entrées" may include: Crab Cakes, Japanese wasabi breadcrumb-crusted, illuminated by South Pacific mango, sweet pepper chutney, partnered with sautéed vegetables and white rice ($19.95); or Thai Noodles (known as Pad Thai), a traditional Thai dish made with flat rice noodles, herbs, spices, shrimp and pork ($16.95). The latter can be mild or hot upon request. An interesting alternative is the Stir-Fry Vegetable Bowl, an assortment of vegetables – bok choy, baby corn, water chestnuts, mushrooms, carrots, peppers and herbs – fused in a wok and served over white rice ($13.95). You can add chicken for an extra $1, shrimp only or shrimp and chicken for an extra $2. Sorrel is open seven days a week in season, from 11am to 10 pm.

Duck

Elizabeth's Café & Winery, ☎ 252-261-6145, e-mail elizcafe@pinn.net, www.elizabethscafe.com, 1177 Duck Road, Suite 11, Scarborough Faire Shops in Duck, has been called, and understandably so, "one of the finest restaurants in the United States." And it is something of a surprise to find a restaurant of such quality tucked away at the back of a shopping center. The dinner menu, designed totally around the fresh ingredients that can be found at market, changes nightly and usually is not published until about 5 pm. Dinner sittings are scheduled at 6 , 6:30 , 8:15 and 8:45 , and reservations here are a necessity. The restaurant is open every night during the high season, and as long afterwards as there is sufficient business to justify remaining open. It closes for one month in the winter.

Diners may order à la carte or opt for either the Prix Fixe Wine Dinner at $80 per person or – the house's real specialty – the Premier Wine Dinner at $125 per person. Prices are quoted exclusive of taxes and gratuity. On the à la carte menu are appetizers like sea scallops and foie gras served with wild

mushrooms duxelles on a toasted french baguette round ($10.95), or grilled andouoille sausage with roasted black bean, shoe peg corn and a Dijon crème fraîche ($8.95). Particularly unique and tempting is the regular soup offering, Elizabeth's Own Scallop and Brie Bisque with Diced Granny Smith Apples ($7.95). The entrées here, designated by particularly detailed descriptions and in the $22 range, might include cucumber-seared yellowfin tuna with a soy ginger beurre blanc, served with wasabi-infused Yukon Gold garlic mashed potatoes with caramelized shallots and sautéed snow peas accompanied by roasted Roma tomatoes and wild rice; oven-baked plump crisp-skinned semi-boneless one-half Maple Leaf Farm duck, served with a dark cherry Merlot, mango Chambord sauce accompanied by Yukon Gold garlic mashed potatoes with caramelized onions and wine-poached vegetables or roasted mushroom-stuffed New Zealand lamb tenderloin with a gorgonzola Bordelaise sauce, served with julienne vegetables and sweet potato purée.

Such gourmet cuisine deserves to be paired with a fine wine list, and it is. In fact, in the 10 years since its inception, Elizabeth's Café & Winery has established a worldwide reputation for its wine selections. In 1998 *Wine Spectator*, the largest and most respected consumer wine magazine in the world, awarded Elizabeth's the "Best of Award of Excellence" for the sixth consecutive year. This coveted honor, recognizing the most outstanding restaurant wine lists in the world, was granted to only 329 restaurants around the globe. Staggeringly, the selection at Elizabeth's includes between 1,200 and 1,500 different vintages at any given time. To assist budding connoisseurs in what can prove to be a difficult selection, owner, Leonard Logan, has fashioned the Prix Fixe Wine Dinner and the Premier Wine Dinner. The menu is too large and complicated to reproduce here, but we can tempt you with a sample dinner. A glass of champagne is followed by a fish entrée served with a 1997 Russian River Valley Chardonnay. Next comes a salad accompanied by 1997 Burgundy Blanc Chardonnay. A palate-cleansing fruit sorbet is enhanced by, and contrasts with, a splash of sparkling wine. A 1993 Château

Plince Pomerol complements the initial plate, Sliced Duck Breast, and the principal plate, Certified Angus Beef Tenderloin Medallion Au Poivre, is well matched with a 1995 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon. The finale, a decadent dessert, is served with fresh roasted coffee. Whether you dine in the French Country Dining Room, the Stone Grotto Wine Cellar or the Sidewalk Café, the culinary experience will be first class, unforgettable and – oh, yes – not inexpensive at $250 per couple. For a very special occasion, though, you will get your money's worth in delectable food, savory wines and cherished memories.

Should you decide, for whatever reason, to forego the meal, definitely don't overlook the wine bar, where the two of you can taste-test some very special vintages and select a bottle to take home for a future celebration. Although smoking is not permitted in the restaurant, a fine selection of cigars is available, in keeping with the current trend, and these may be savored after your meal on the porch.

The **Duck News Café**, ☎ 252-261-6117, 1564 Duck Road, Duck, is located on the waterfront of Currituck Sound, across from The Sanderling Inn. This innovative eatery, with a newspaper theme, has the scoop on tasty cuisine. And patrons can read all about it on a menu very cleverly divided into "Headline News" (alias, appetizers at $2.25 to $8.95), "World News" (pastas, at $10.95 to $14.95), "Feature Articles" (you don't win the Pulitzer for guessing those are entrées, at $12.95 to $29.95) and "Late Edition" (desserts, at $1.95 to $4.95). The house specialties, though, are the real breaking story, with crab imperial, fresh pasta and slow roasted prime rib most deserving of a byline. For the comfort of non-smoking patrons, smoking is limited to the bar, lounge and outdoor area. The Duck News Café is open for dinner daily, in season, from 5 pm to 9:30 pm.

The **Duck Deli**, ☎ 252-261-3354 or 255-0861, 1378 Duck Road, Duck, opened in 1988 and took little time in establishing itself as the area's favorite small country barbecue restaurant. Success didn't stop there, however. The owner, Ron Forlano, a retired dentist from Pennsylvania, realized quickly that fish were suitable for smoking, too, and pioneered Carolina Blue

Smoked Wildfish. Historically, fishermen in these parts had been paid rather scantily for their catches. Ron, however, offered premium prices for the best quality fish, smoked them and then wrapped them in deliciously appetizing packages suitable for shipping anywhere in the country. Tuna, salmon fillet, shrimp, scallops, king mackerel and wild bluefish, marketed both individually and in a variety of tempting combinations, can be seen in their catalogue or on the web. Place an order at ☎ 800-589-1690, 24-hours a day, seven days a week, or order from their website at www.smokedfishnc.com, or www.theouterbanks.com/wildfish. It goes without saying that The Duck Deli is famed for smoked food. Also to recommend it are a lively, informal ambiance and prices that don't break the bank. Salads ($2.75 to $7.50), Duck Deli Fabulous Sandwiches ($5.75 to $6.95) and Duck Deli Hickory Smoked Barbecue, in the form of platters ($6.95 to $12.95) or sandwiches, all feature some variety of smoked food.

Kill Devil Hills

Mako Mike's, at Milepost 7, 158 Bypass, Kill Devil Hills, ☎ 252-480-1919, fax 252-480-2244, e-mail wmamako@aol.com, www.makomikes.com, serves up killer food and a healthy dose of fun. This engaging establishment is the latest invention of well-known Outer Banks restaurateur Mike Kelly, who is also the owner of the popular Kelly's Restaurant and of the elegant Penguin Isle. Kelly began his restaurant career at the bottom, first washing dishes and busing tables, then waiting tables and working his way up to management. In fashioning the restaurants he now owns, Kelly has combined the knowledge gained from invaluable hands-on experience with visions from a fertile imagination and an uncanny business sense to the undeniable benefit of his patrons. Each of his eateries has a different character, with Mako Mike's being, undoubtedly, the most innovative.

Here, a cheerfully casual under-the-sea ambiance is created on three dining levels by brightly colored, crisply modern furnishings; amazingly creative murals and multi-dimensional sculptures by local artists from which whimsical underwater

creatures seem to swim right off the walls; an array of fish mobiles suspended overhead; and a 200-gallon saltwater aquarium populated by a variety of multi-hued marine fish. General Manager Bill Martin relates that "What Mr. Kelly wanted to create was an unusual restaurant with great energy and a casually elegant cuisine that offered something for everyone." And, from our firsthand experience, that is exactly what he did.

The menu is multi-dimensional, offering over 50 items at prices that won't break the bank. Starters such as hot crab dip ($5.95) and crab-stuffed mushrooms ($4.95) were tempting, but we settled on the very tasty focaccia bread, fresh baked dough topped with fresh garlic, olive oil and herbs, served with marinara sauce ($2.50). The expected range of seafood entrées ($12.95 to $19.95, with side dishes) included blackened mako coated with Cajun spice and served with cucumber and tomato salsa, and perennial favorites such as crab legs, stuffed flounder, and deep fried shrimp. Highlighting the steak, chicken and pork entrées ($10.95 to $15.95, including side dishes) is the popular herb-crusted chicken, lightly breaded filets, sautéed with fresh spinach and mushrooms and finished with white wine cream sauce. Pasta dishes, such as seafood marinara and scallops carbonara (both priced at $11.95), and wood oven pizzas prepared by the hardworking pizza chef round out the entrée offerings. Whatever you do, though, save room for dessert. At Mako Mike's they are homemade – from the bourbon pecan pie to the key lime cheesecake.

Finally, decidedly adding to your dining pleasure is the service. From the time you walk in the door expect to be catered to attentively and efficiently by a cheerful staff from the management on down. And, although you will likely have to endure a short wait to be seated – Mako Mike's doesn't take reservations for parties of less than six and the demand is high – you will hardly notice the delay as you peruse fun souvenirs and Mako Mike's specialty items in the gift shop. Alternatively, wile away the time in the Octopus Lounge. Cooled by the rhythmic whir of antique paddle fans and featuring a sunken bar, this is a cozy place to enjoy a specialty cocktail or some other favorite beverage.

Breakfast is an experience here, too, with such dishes as Mako's Blackened Tuna Benedict and Mad Shark Scramble served from 7 am to noon daily in season. The Killer Breakfast Buffet is offered on Saturday and Sunday from 8 am until noon ($5.95). Mako Mike's is open year-round for dinner with the feeding frenzy beginning at 4:30.

The **Flying Fish Café**, ☎ 252-441-6894, Milepost 10, Highway 158 Bypass, Downtown Kill Devil Hills, is a sophisticated, but casual, restaurant serving American and Mediterranean cuisine. Although seafood is on the agenda, there is a wider range of other offerings than most other restaurants in the area. The regular menu, which is rather limited, includes appetizers such as baked spinach and parmesan pie topped with pan fried oysters ($4.95) and flying fish bisque ($2.50/$3.50); and entrées like breaded baked chicken breast stuffed with Swiss cheese, smoked ham, and provolone cheese in a mushroom cream sauce ($12.95) or grilled pork loin over cumin applesauce ($13.95). There is, however, a comprehensive range of specials on offer. On our last visit, we enjoyed a salad of smoked rockfish on mixed wild greens with red onions, bell peppers, smoked gouda, tomatoes, carrots and curry mustard dressing ($4.95) and an entrée of scallops poached in a garlic white wine fish stock with sweet bell peppers, red onions and tomatoes on spinach linguine ($15.95). No matter your choice, you will want to leave room for one of the enticing "endings." After all, who could resist their "Tour of the Mediterranean" pastry plate, including Mama Xenakis' baklava, cannoli with cherry and chocolate chunk filling and a cinnamon-walnut rugelach ($5.95). Wines are nicely presented, divided into three categories and priced, depending upon your selection, by the glass or the bottle or by the bottle only. Rounding out the Mediterranean theme are ports, dessert wines and liqueurs, and a selection of espresso and cappuccino coffees. Captain Morgan's Hot Rum Toddy, served before or after your meal, is a house signature drink. The Flying Fish Café opens for lunch from 11:30 am to 5 pm, and for dinner from 5 to 10 pm, daily.

Goombay's Grille and Raw Bar, ☎ 252-441-6001, 1608 North Virginia Dare Trail, Milepost 7.5, Kill Devil Hills, has a

crazy décor and an enjoyably lighthearted atmosphere that, combined, are a perfect match for the beach environment. In their words, they have a tropical taste in a casual place for the maximum of fun. Not surprisingly, the menu is equally eclectic. Lunch dishes, a combination of sandwiches and hot plates ($2.59 to $6.50 or market price), are served Monday to Saturday from 11:30 am to 4 pm and Sunday from midday to 4 pm. Dinner is served from 5 to 10 pm, and consists of "Grill Me" selections ($15.99, market price or priced daily), which can be topped up with one of the Goombay's incredible sauces for an additional $1.59. Enjoy "Caribbean Creations" such as West Indian curried chicken, sautéed chicken breasts in curry coconut milk cream sauce with bananas, raisins and coconuts ($11.99), or Cane Garden Bay pasta, shrimp and sausage sautéed in olive oil with fresh veggies, spices and linguini ($13.99). They are served (with the exception of pastas) with black beans, rice and veggie of the day. Alternatively, Locals Love 'Em with Goombays' Tantalizing Stir-Fry, which changes daily ($13.99), or Oink du Jour, an ever-changing pork dish (priced daily) are worthy of a look. In addition to these many enticing options, Goombay's has a menu of "Anytime Selections" that are served anytime, for lunch or dinner, on Monday to Saturday between 11:30 am and 10 pm and on Sunday from midday to 10 pm. These include "Appetizers Ahoy" ($2.29 to $7.99), "Soups & Salads" ($2.99 to $6.59), "Burger Boats" ($5.29 to $7.79) and a range of sandwiches and hot dishes ($6.99/$7.59 and market price). Finally, open daily year-round from 11:30 am to 2 am and particularly tempting for a late-night snack is the Steamed & Raw Bar, where the choices are varied: steamed veggies with parmesan cheese ($4.99), clams, steamed or raw (a half-dozen, $5.20, or a dozen, $9.99), steamed crab legs or steamed spiced shrimp (each ½ lb. $8.99 or 1 lb. $15.99), broccoli and carrots with spiced steamed shrimp ($8.99) or the Steamed Combo, a choice of three from shrimp, clams, crab legs and veggies ($15.99). Oh, and before leaving, check out Goombay's colorful t-shirts, which, unlike most clothing sold for advertisement, are of very high quality. We were so taken with them, in fact, that, we bought four.

Nags Head

Situated on the sound, with ringside seats for glorious sunsets, both indoors and on a spacious deck, is **Penguin Isle Soundside Grill and Bar**, Milepost 16, Bypass, Nags Head, ☎ 252-441-2637 and fax 252-441-2941. The main dining room is elegantly inviting – furnished with linen-draped, candlelit tables formally set with china and crystal; cooled by the whir of myriad ceiling fans; tastefully embellished with maritime artwork; and brightened by walls of large arched windows,with lovely views across the sound. And the food – fresh, innovatively prepared and presented with flair – is as seductive as the setting. In fact, as a testimony to the quality of its contemporary American cuisine and exemplary service, Penguin Isle has been awarded the AAA Three-Diamond Award and hailed by *Wine Spectator Magazine* as "one of the top 100 steak houses in the US." As you would expect, the service is outstanding. We found the employees to be incredibly well trained and knowledgeable and the waitstaff efficient and friendly, yet respectful of intimate conversation.

Specialties are mesquite-grilled Black Angus beef, poultry and local seafood, homemade pastas, and freshly baked fruit breads. Among the wide-ranging selection of starters are mushrooms stuffed with jumbo lump crab meat; Southern-Style Escargot, snails on a black bean cake with tequila horseradish sauce; and Penn's Choice, chilled jumbo lump crabmeat, oysters on the half-shell, jumbo shrimp, smoked mackerel and hot seafood dip. A standard list of tempting main courses is augmented each evening by the Chef's Seasonal Selections, which might include Baked Mattamaskeet Jumbo Lump Crabmeat Resnick, topped with hot and bubbly Swiss cheese ($17.95); pan seared free range veal tenderloin medallions, venison sausage and shrimp, with wild mushroom Marsala wine sauce ($21.95); or Mixed Grill of swordfish, salmon and yellowfin tuna, with extra virgin olive oil Greek sauce and feta cheese ($18.95). Accompaniments of delicious fresh-baked fruit breads, crisp salad and seasonal vegetables are included in entrée prices. The wine menu offers a wide selection of vintages, many reasonably priced and with some offered by the

glass. The dessert tray is unbearably tempting, with such confections as tiramisu, chocolate mousse and key lime pie.

Dinner is served, March to December, from 5 until 10 pm. And if you can drag yourselves away from the beach in the later afternoon, an Early Dining Menu, with slightly reduced prices is served daily until 6 pm. Reservations are suggested.

Our suggestion: Arrive a few minutes before your reservation to share your favorite cocktail and the views from the romantic soundfront Gazebo Lounge or on the Outdoor Deck.

The **Windmill Point Restaurant**, ☎ 252-441-1535, Milepost 16½, Highway 158 Bypass, is set well back from the road and overlooks Roanoke Sound. This is a delightful and interesting place to dine – for more reasons than the imaginative American cuisine. Dr. Sarah E. Forbes, the proprietress, has amassed here the largest collection of memorabilia from the *SS United States*, the most luxurious, fastest and the largest ship of its time. This forms the décor, creating one of the most unusual restaurants on the Outer Banks. Nowhere is this truer than in the upper-level Lounge, the perfect place to enjoy a before-dinner cocktail. In fact, this room replicates the lounge aboard the *SS United States*, and the furnishings – including the bar, cocktail tables and chairs– are originals from that ship.

The SS United States *was launched in 1952, and immediately took the Blue Ribbon for the fastest Atlantic crossing from the Queen Mary. When it was retired 17 years later, the ship had traveled an amazing 2,772,840 nautical miles. Its last master, Commodore Leroy J. Alexanderson, visits the Windmill Point Restaurant twice a year and regales the staff with tales of his experiences, recollecting conversations with President Kennedy, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor and Marilyn Monroe, to name a few.*

Moving down the stairs and turning thoughts to food, you will find the fare extremely tasty. The emphasis is heavily on seafood, and soups and appetizers include: she crab bisque, the house version of the local favorite, prepared traditionally and finished with cream and sherry (cup $3.75 or bowl $4.75); jalepeño crab cakes, served with Cajun butter; and fresh local seafood, smoked right on the premises over assorted hardwoods, and served with horseradish sauce and capers (each $7.95). Main dishes are divided into categories: "Seafood" ($16.50 to $19.95 or market prices), "Pasta" ($17.95), "Land and Sea Combinations" ($19.95 to $21.95), "Land Lubber's Fare" ($19.95 to $20.75) and "Fowl" ($15.95 to $18.95). It is open for dinner daily, year-round, from 4:30 to 10 pm. Oh, and true to the name, it is easily found next to the large windmill on the premises.

Owens' Restaurant, Milepost 16½, Beach Road, Nags Head, ☎ 252-441-7309, a AAA Three-Diamond Award recipient for the past 20 years, has been owned and operated by the Owens and Shannon families, Nags Head natives, for over a half-century. The legacy began when Clara and Bob Owens closed up their hotdog stand in Manteo in favor of a 24-seat café and some tourist cottages across the bridge on a barren strip of land called Nags Head. They served three meals a day to fishermen, hunters and the handful of tourists that visited during the eight-10-week season. When Bob Owens died, leaving Clara with two small children, Miss O continued to run Owens' Café single-handedly, serving up quality food, good service and Southern hospitality. In fact, with the help of her children and extended family, she worked in the restaurant until she was 80 years young. Today, Miss O's daughter, Clara Mae, and her husband manage the restaurant – expanded over the years to three dining rooms, an upstairs bar and lounge and a spacious entry area warmed by collections of family antiques and artifacts of seafaring days gone by. The atmosphere still reflects the legendary lazy magic of the Outer Banks and the emphasis is still on quality food, good service and Southern hospitality. The menu, which still offers Miss O's crab cakes and hush puppies, features classic local Southern coastal cuisine – highlight-

ing fresh-off-the-boat seafood and shellfish, whole Maine lobster, tender aged Angus beef, ribs, pasta and outrageously delicious homemade desserts, complemented by an extensive wine list. Entrées are in the $15.95-$28.95 range. On a final note, there is an on-site gift shop where a highly popular item is the mix for Miss O's famous hush puppies.

A few miles up the road at Milepost 10½ on the 158 Bypass in Nags Head is **Kelly's Outer Banks Restaurant and Tavern**, ☎ 252-441-4116, fax 252-480-2665, e-mail info@kellysrestaurant.com, www.kellysrestaurant.com. Their menu highlights fresh North Carolina seafood, Iowa beef, pastas and chicken. The ambiance is warmed by a collection of Outer Banks memorabilia, friendly service, and by entertainment nightly. Appetizers, in the $3.95-$5.95 range, are joined by soups ($1.50-$2.95) and salads ($1.95-$10.95) to round out the pre-meal temptations. Seafood entrées, which figure most prominently and include a host of favorites, range in price from $13.95 to $24.95. Chicken and pasta lovers will find a handful of choices and beef lovers will be corralled by Kelly's Famous Prime Rib, available in portions for "Captains" (14 oz.) at $19.95 and for "Mates" (10 oz.) at $17.95. All entrées include salad, starch, vegetable and bread. Chef's Specials, which change daily, selections from the Raw Bar and Early Bird Specials round out the fare. Desserts are homemade and decadent. Finally, if you are in the mood to party up a storm, check out Kelly's Old Hurricane, a blend of light and dark rums, juices and spices that will set your senses reeling and send you on your way with a keepsake glass. Kelly's is open year-round, with dinner served from to 10 pm, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Reservations are not required but are recommended.

Tortuga's Lie Shellfish Bar & Grill, ☎ 252-441-RAWW, Milepost 11.5, Beach Road, Nags Head, is a Caribbean-style restaurant whose ambiance fits easily in to the beach environment. Here, seafood, chicken, beef and vegetarian dishes get a tropical twist in such entrées as Jamaican jerk chicken, a spicy grilled breast with grilled pineapple and a dollop of sour cream ($6.95), or the grilled fish & black bean burrito in a cheddar jalapeño wrap with jack cheese and fresh sprouts, served with

rice, salsa and sour cream ($8.95). Rounding out the fare is a nice selection of pasta and steamed seafood dishes and a sushi menu. The full bar serves specialty drinks, wine, and buckets of beer, including micro brews.

The Dunes Restaurant, MP 16 US Hwy 158 Bypass, Nags Head ☎ 252-441-1600, is a favorite spot for breakfast, frequented by locals, visitors and fishermen. Down-home Southern favorites like eggs, grits, hash browns, corn beef hash and fried apples are served up in healthy portions and at very reasonable prices in a pleasant family atmosphere. The Dunes is open also for lunch and dinner, serving typical beach seafood fare. It is closed during the month of January.

Kitty Hawk

The Black Pelican Oceanfront Café, ☎ 252-261-3171 or fax 261-1437, Milepost 4, Beach Road, Kitty Hawk, comes by its name from *The Legend of The Black Pelican*, described on the back of the menu. This informal restaurant has become an Outer Banks' institution. Seating is in one of several dining areas or in a sizeable sports bar. Expect a range of appetizers, including unusual dishes, such as roasted garlic and baked Brie served with pita bread ($7.95); or grilled octopus, in which olive oil, garlic, bay leaves and white wine enhance the flavor of this delicious delicacy ($6.95). A selection of specialty salads ($2.75 to $7.95) may precede any number of entrées: Rack of Ribs, char-grilled baby back ribs smothered in homemade BBQ sauce ($14.95); baked shrimp and crab, a boat of fresh shrimp and crabmeat baked to perfection and topped with beurre blanc sauce ($18.95); or several nightly specials served with seasonal vegetable, red potatoes and homemade Turkish pita bread. Shellfish are found on a steamed and raw bar menu.

> *Opt for the Frogmore Clambake, a Kitty Hawk tradition featuring steamed shellfish – plump mussels, clams, oysters, and spicy shrimp – Andouille sausage slices, plus steamed seasonal vegetables and red potatoes ($16.95 for one; $32.95 for two).*

Shops, Spas, etc.

Occasionally in our travels we come across a jewelry store that we want to bring to our readers' attention. Amazingly, we found not just one but two on the Outer Banks, at opposite ends of Nags Head. These stores are distinguished by the exceptionally interesting philosophies of the artists who run them.

The **Scarborough Faire Shopping Center**, in Duck, contains the studio of Sara De Spain, ☎ 252-255-0633 or 261-5591. Sara, a graduate gemologist from the Gemological Institute of America and trained in identifying and grading diamonds and colored gemstones, has been creating jewelry on the Outer Banks since 1974. Creating is not a word we use indiscriminately when talking about her work. In fact, simply talking to her about her work is a fascinating experience. She is an artist, and, in ways that we mere mortals would struggle to understand, she transforms the nature she sees around her into precociously beautiful, free-flowing and colorful jewelry. She aspires, in her own words, to echo the beauty, precision and grace she observes in God's living work all around her. She describes her works as small sculptures, which indeed they are. She believes that jewelry should fit the look, personality and body of the wearer, and be versatile enough to make a fashion statement whether worn with an evening dress or with jeans. Don't expect to find many straight lines. The simplest shapes seem to take on a character of their own, appearing wavy and windblown throughout her work. The pieces are asymmetrically balanced, multi-dimensional in color, and express a fluidity of motion. Sarah enjoys rare and unusual stones, with surprising color combinations and exceptional cuts. So famous has Sara De Spain's work become that it has been shown in the North Carolina Museum of Art, and her name appears in *Who's Who of American Women*. Her work is not inexpensive. Prices range from around $100 to $15,000 for a heart-shaped diamond ring. We can guarantee, however, that any one of Sara's pieces would become a favorite in your loved one's jewelry cabinet.

At the other end of the beach at 207 Queen Elizabeth Avenue on the Manteo Waterfront, is a second jeweler, **Diamonds 'n Dunes**, ☎ 252-473-1002, fax 473-1195, e-mail diamonds@beachlink.com. This establishment is owned and operated by Ken Alexanian Kelley, a jeweler-designer, and his wife, Eileen Kelley Alexanian, a graduate gemologist. They have been married for 11 years. Prior to opening this store in 1992, Ken was employed by a prestigious jewelry firm on Manhattan's 47th Street. Both belong to the American Gem Society and the Independent Jewelry Organization, with membership in the latter allowing them to hand-select for their customers a diamond from the International Market at Antwerp, Belgium. Among a glittering array of jewelry, we found several exclusive collections to be of particular interest, many with an appropriate seaside flare. Lighthouse Bracelets have each been custom designed by Ken and depict the numerous lighthouses of the Outer Banks and North Carolina. The name of the lighthouse is engraved on each one, with some being signed by the artist. As of 1999, Ken has added to the design a diamond stone to represent each sentinel's beacon. Original Lighthouse Lens Cut Rings, incorporating beautiful gemstones, are fashioned after lighthouse beacons. The Sea Life Jewelry collection, most crafted in 14 kt. gold, includes pelicans, crabs, jumping dolphins, mermaids with pearls, seashell pendants with blushing pink enamel interiors, detailed seahorses, and sterling silver fish finished in bright enamel. Very intriguing are elegant Ear Pins that wrap the ear in gold, gemstone and diamond designs. Among our favorites are the Akteo watches, which have Swiss movement, leather or metal bands, are water-resistant to 99 feet, carry a two-year warranty and cost between $89 to $99. The real novelty, however, is that you may choose from over 300 different models, each styled to reflect on the face of the watch an individual's interests, hobbies or occupation.

Our Suggestion: Choose matching watches to reflect a shared interest and create a timeless memory while vacationing here on the Outer Banks.

Finally, if you are planning an engagement anytime soon, consider Diamonds 'n Dunes for your rings. In addition to offering the best of selections, the service is ultra-personal; Ken and Eileen will even give you a bottle of their private-label wine or champagne by way of celebration when the spirit moves them.

If you have left children at home to do your romancing, you can soothe some ruffled feathers with a surprise from one of two delightfully different toy stores. Like the jewelry stores above, they are at opposite ends of the beach and in close proximity, respectively, to Sara De Spain's and Diamonds and Dunes. The first, **Toy-Rific**, 1171 Duck Road, Suite 1-5 in the Scarborough Lane Shoppes, e-mail Toy@interpath.com, is a hands-on store where everyone is invited to come in and play. In fact, this store is not really just for children – their slogan is "Specialty Toys for Big and Little Girls and Boys." Maybe you ladies are into collecting dolls, like Kathy. Or, maybe there are some romantically minded gentlemen who have retained a boyhood fascination with toy trains. If so, this is really the place for you. A wonderful LBG train layout, visible to shoppers inside and browsers outside, actually runs around the store, passing through exterior walls and out onto the walkway. Filling every nook and cranny are toys from around the world, including an interesting selection handmade in the old world tradition by toy craftsmen. In short, whether you are shopping for yourselves or for the wee ones in your lives, or if you just want to play, Toy-Rific will welcome your visit. Back at the Waterfront Shops on Roanoke Island, Jennifer McGaha and Christine Webster, owners of **The Poop Deck**, ☎ 252-473-6171, fax 252-473-3535 or e-mail toyboat@one800.net, have created a similar kid/shopper-friendly environment. Name brands such as Learning Curve International, Educational Insights, and World-Class Learning Materials, give a quick clue that educational toys are highlighted here. And, in addition to keeping up with the latest toy innovations and trends, traditional (and not so easy to find) favorites like wooden doll furniture and wooden puzzles are in stock. The Toy Boat targets kids of all ages; their slogan is "Toys for the Young and the Young at Heart." They

also, thoughtfully, will wrap your purchases free of charge and will ship anywhere that the US Mail or UPS delivers.

Within the past decade, all manner of shops dedicated to the celebration of the Christmas season have sprung up throughout the country, with most major tourist areas having (maybe more than) their share. The Outer Banks, though, has a shop of this genre that is unique among the many and was attracting visitors in droves long before the current trend began. Since 1967, **The Christmas Shop and Island Gallery** has been a must for most area vacationers. It is located on Highway 64 in Manteo, NC 27954, ☎ 262-473-2838 or 800-470-2838, e-mail santa@outerbankschristmas.com, www.outerbankschristmas.com. Entry into this wonderland of seasonal sights, sounds and aromas is through a spacious re-creation of Mann's General Store, which closed its doors in the 1930s. On offer here, as at Mann's, is a veritable treasure trove of old-fashioned merchandise. The balance of the 25,000-square-foot complex incorporates 36 rooms, filled to overflowing with gifts, collectibles, music boxes, toys, jewelry, stationery, candles, decoys, pottery, Outer Banks souvenirs, home décor items and, in the galleries, the work of over 100 regional artists and craftsmen. The real magic is found, however, in the six Christmas rooms, with 30 light-bedecked, fully decorated trees, Christmas ornaments by the thousands, and other decorations that are sure to dazzle. The variety and the presentation are, quite simply, enchanting. You are sure to leave with a Christmas carol in your heart and an armful of packages. The Christmas Shop is open during June, July and August from 9:30 am to 9 pm Monday through Saturday, and from 9:30 am to 8:30 pm on Sunday. At other times of the year, as the hours vary, it is best to call ahead for the schedule.

One of the delights of a visit to the Outer Banks is the opportunity to observe the amazing number of birds that either live on, or migrate along, these shores. These often exotic creatures, reproduced as decoys or other carvings, are on display in numerous local shops. These are highly collectible and, in selecting one for your home, you will want to look for quality and authenticity. We refer you then to **The Wooden Feather**, ☎ 252-261-2808, 1171 Duck Road, Suite B3, Duck, in the Scarborough

Lane Shopping Center. The proprietors, two sisters and a brother (Amy, Wendy and Lance Lichtensteiger), come with a carving pedigree – their father, Lance, has some 20 years experience in the craft. In 1998, all three came to the conclusion that they wanted to start a business of their own. So they relocated to the Outer Banks, from Vermont, Arizona and New Jersey, respectively, and assumed ownership of The Wooden Feather, which had been in business for over a decade. At any given time, you will find work here by over 75 artists from throughout the nation, but also by many who are local to the Outer Banks, North Carolina, Chesapeake and the Eastern Shore of Virginia. The amazingly diverse array of pieces includes decoys – old, antique and new – shorebirds, sculpture, original paintings, prints, photography, model boats, stained glass and other unique home furnishings. These original pieces of art are each handcrafted in the United States of wood, metalwork, clay, glass or driftwood, or any combination thereof. Whatever you choose will be a happy reminder of your time together on the Outer Banks. The Wooden Feather is open daily from 10 am to 6 pm, with hours extended until 10 pm in the summer.

Hammocks, too, are a popular and useful souvenir from the Outer Banks. Just imagine lazily rocking to and fro in the shade of an ancient tree, a cold drink nearby, on a hot and sultry summer afternoon or caressed by a crisp autumn breeze. Indulge your fantasies with **Nags Head Hammocks**, ☎ 252-441-6115, 800-344-6433, fax 480-0415, e-mail sales@nagshead.com, www.nagshead.com. The main store is at 1801 Croatan Highway, 158 Bypass, Kill Devil Hills, but there are other locations at TimBuck II in Corolla, 1212 Duck Road in Duck; at Highway 158 in Point Harbor; and at Avon on Hatteras Island. Celebrating their 25th anniversary in 1999, owners Chuck and Susan Sineath are proud that the original high quality rope "Nags Head Hammocks" are made here by their own craftsmen. While you are likely most familiar with the standard rope hammock, available in single ($105-$145), double ($109-$149) or extra-wide sizes ($119-$159), these are not the only products they make. Look, also, for hammock

chairs ($155-$165), sling shot swings ($89-$110), rope furniture – including folding single or double rockers ($169-$259), captain's chairs ($169-$179), double recliners ($239-$259), folding rope footstools ($49-$54), folding rope bar stools ($169-$179), and even a toy chest hammock ($25). The price within each range is mainly dependent on color, as some hues are more costly to produce. Accessories, too, are intriguing. Who could buy a hammock without taking a drink caddy ($10) as well? And, if the promise of such relaxation can't wait for a visit, Nags Head Hammocks is open for telephone and fax orders from 9 am to 6 pm daily, or you can order from their website at any time.

Our next suggestion may be particularly enticing if you get a rainy day or just want a break from the rays. The **Eden Day Spa and Salon**, ☎ 252-255-0711 or 255-0504, 1245 Duck Road, Duck, offers the usual range of individual spa services, including half-hour ($30), one hour ($55) and 1½-hour ($75) massages and a menu of spa selections that combine two or three treatments. A massage, a facial and a wrap with either seaweed, algae or moor mud, for example, is $155. Those with a bit more time (five to six hours) and cash to spare might consider one of many enticing packages, each of which includes lunch. Among these are the Eden Spa Special ($165); the Deluxe Spa Package ($210); or, the ultimate in luxurious treatment, the Super Deluxe Spa Package. Priced at $315, the latter gives ladies a sample of every treatment going, a shampoo and blow dry, and full makeup application. In other words, guys, if you time it right, when you pick her up for a pre-dinner cocktail, she will not only be feeling good but looking good as well. Lunch is included with all the packages, and the spa is open Monday through Saturday from 10 am to 6 pm.

Last, or first, depending upon whether you choose to stop on the way into or the way out of the Outer Banks, is a Southern shopping tradition that really shouldn't be missed. Located just 11 miles north of the Wright Memorial Bridge on Highway 168 in Jarvisburg and in a building that opened in 1929 as a working cotton gin, is a unique shopping adventure in an atmosphere of bygone days. Aptly named, **The Cotton Gin** might

best be described as a country marketplace – colorful, a bit on the rustic side, quaint and with friendly service. Room after room, from attic to cellar, is chock-full of items that will set your shopping senses reeling. There are North Carolina loomed textiles, handmade quilts, waterfowl carvings, soaps and candles, stuffed animals, collectible dolls, wicker baskets, gourmet kitchen wear and accessories, men's and women's classic clothing, adorable country crafts and accessories, jams, jellies, candies, jewelry, knickknacks, and a variety of items featuring a seaside theme. Look for a number of specialty displays such as Teddy's Place, Gnome Hollow, The Mug Room and The Wildfowler Store. Kathy's favorite, though, is the festive Christmas Loft, which displays gloriously decorated trees year-round, and an abundance of holiday items and collectibles, including the very popular Department 56 lines. If you want a foretaste of what to expect, you can order a full-color catalog from The Cotton Gin, Deep Creek Farm, PO Box 414, Jarvisburg, NC 27947. Or call ☎ 800-637-2446, e-mail info@cottongin.com, or pay a virtual visit to www.cottongin.com. The Cotton Gin is open 364 days a year (closed on Christmas) and remains open until 8 pm during the season.

Ocracoke Island

Fourteen-mile-long Ocracoke Island, one of a host of barrier islands on the Outer Banks of North Carolina, is accessible only by water or air.

History

When the first Europeans arrived in the 1500s, they found it inhabited by Indians. By the early 18th century, it had been incorporated into Bath County, of which the main town by the same name is the oldest town in North Carolina. In 1705, Bath County was divided into three. The section containing Ocracoke initially was dubbed Wickham, although that subsequently was changed to Hyde, in honor of Edward Hyde, a cousin of Queen Anne who was made Colonial Governor of

North Carolina. In 1715, the North Carolina Colonial Assembly recognized a settlement here, which had been established by seafaring pilots who guided vessels through Ocracoke Inlet.

During this era the inlet became a favorite haunt of the notorious pirate Blackbeard, who met his grisly end in hand-to-hand combat and then was beheaded off the shores of Ocracoke in 1718.

Ocracoke Today

Ocracoke Village, with a population of around 700, is nestled around a natural harbor formed by Silver Lake on the southwest tip of the island. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1990, the village's Historic District includes the Ocracoke Lighthouse, the 1942 Coast Guard Station, several historic commercial buildings and over 100 homes. The balance of the island is an integral part of the Cape Hatteras National Seashore, which is owned by the National Park Service and virtually undeveloped.

Getting There

On of the pleasures of a visit to Ocracoke Island is the process of getting there. For at least the majority of visitors, this entails an introduction to the North Carolina Ferry System, ☎ 800-BY FERRY (800-293-3779), www.dot.state.nc.us/transit/ferry. A system of ferries, which for many years were privately operated, has connected the coastal communities of Eastern North Carolina since the mid-1920s. By 1934 the state had begun subsidizing these services and, after the Second World War in 1947, the North Carolina Transportation Department established the North Carolina Ferry Division. Working in five different bodies of water – Pamlico Sound, Currituck Sound, Neuse River, Pamlico River and Cape Fear River, the 24 current ferry vessels operate at an average speed of 10 knots and can maneuver in as little as five feet of water. The shortest

crossing, between Cherry Branch and Minnesott Beach, is just 2.3 miles and takes 20 minutes, while the longest, from Swan Quarter to Ocracoke Island, is 27 miles and takes 2½ hours. Together, these comprise one of the largest ferry systems in the United States and, each year, over 2.3 million residents and visitors ride the seven routes in the system.

To reach Ocracoke Island, you can take any one of three ferries. From the north, leave Hatteras (☎ 800-368-8949 for information) for a 45-minute ride that is free of charge and employs a first-come first-served, no-reservations policy. From the west, depart from Swan Quarter (☎ 252-926-111 or 800-773-1094 for reservations) for a 2½-hour sailing. From the south, set sail from Cedar Island (☎ 828-225-3551 or 800-856-0343 for reservations) on a 2¼-hour crossing. Reservations are suggested for the latter two options, especially in season. Departures from Ocracoke may be arranged by calling ☎ 252-928-3841 or 800-345-1665 and, with the exception of the Hatteras route, we would recommend that reservations be made ahead of time.

Such trips, especially for first timers, can be a real adventure. Among our abiding memories is a late afternoon fall sailing from Ocracoke Island to Cedars Island. We were crossing just before nightfall when the sky went black as countless thousands of seabirds – including a host of brown pelicans, arose from the water in flight to their nightly homes. It is amusing to watch these birds following just behind the ferry, wheeling around and around as they try to catch tidbits of food you throw up for them. In sum, this is a lovely and relaxing way to travel.

Things to Do

On Ocracoke Island, surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean on one side and Pamlico Sound on the other, water activities dominate the recreational options. Fishing, in many of its forms is obviously a popular pastime here. If you are in the market for a bit of professional assistance, we recommend you contact **Captain David Nagel**, ☎ 252-928-5351 or 800-825-5351. Captain David is a licensed skipper and expert fishing guide, who can

get you just where you need to go and help you to catch the fish of your dreams. A full day's inshore fishing costs $650 and a full day's wreck or Gulf Stream fishing – either trolling or bottom fishing – will set you back $750. Between December and March he specializes in giant bluefin tuna fishing, which will cost you $850. If you want to keep the cost down and don't mind a bit of company, you can join a party of fellow fisherpeople at $70 for a half-day or half-night. All trips depart from The Anchorage Marina and fees include all bait and tackle.

On a less serious note, you might enjoy a trip on the ***Miss Ocracoke***, ☎ 252-928-6060 or 921-0107. Half-day fishing trips, either from 8 am to midday or from 1 to 5 pm, both with bait and tackle provided, depart on Monday to Saturday and cost just $25. Dolphin Cruises leave on Wednesday through Saturday from 6:30 pm to 8:30, and are an affordable $20 per person.

If sailing interests you, check out the ***Windfall***, ☎ 252-928 SAIL (928-7245), a modern replica of the sort of vessel that plied these waters in days gone by. Inspected and certified by the US Coast Guard for the transport of 30 passengers, she sets sail three times during the day for a one-hour trip that costs just $10 per person. Romantic weekenders, though, may be more of a mind to take the Sunset Cruise, priced at $15 each and lasting approximately 1¼ hours. Easily identified by its pirate flag and red sails, this ship departs from the Community Store docks in Ocracoke Village.

The more adventuresome and environmentally minded, will want to book a Kayak Eco-Tour through **Ride the Wind Surf Shop**, ☎ 252-928-6311 or fax 928-3267, located on Highway 12 at Silver Lake Harbor. $30 per person buys three hours of exploration, guided by an experienced naturalist who will instruct you in the handling of your kayak, choose the best area for the tour, and provide a wealth of information on the natural life of the area. Among the specialty tours, the birdwatching trip will be of interest to many, as ocracoke is on the eastern flyway of many migrating water and land birds and the winter home of the Canada goose. If you so desire, the accommodating

folks at Ride the Wind will customize a tour for just the two of you – perhaps a sunrise, sunset or full-moon trip.

Should you prefer to skipper your own craft, contact **Island Rentals**, ☎ 252-928-5480, e-mail cbmville@aol.com, for a fiberglass, flat-bottom motor boat or catamaran-style motor boat just perfect for exploring the shallow waters of Pamlico Sound. You can then ferret out your own spot to fish, clam and shell – and just imagine the possibilities for a romance at sea. Each boat is equipped with anchor, life vests and safety equipment and, depending upon the vessel you select, the cost will be $70 to $95 for a half-day (anything up to four hours) or $99 to $125 for a full day. Reservations must be made a week ahead of time, and craft must be returned one hour before sunset as use after dark is not allowed.

Back on land, quaint **Ocracoke Village** offers attractions of its own. Actually, for a place so small, it has more than its fair share. Not the least of these is a simple stroll around town to enjoy the very unusual old-world ambiance and charm which, thankfully, has managed to avoid commercial corruption. Peeking out from any number of unassuming nooks and crannies are an array of specialty and craft stores. When you are ready for a bit of refreshment, have a seat at one of many harborside cafés where you may observe, in total relaxation, the comings and goings of boats and the antics of seabirds frolicking overhead.

On one of Ocracoke Island's highest spots stands the **Ocracoke Lighthouse**. Built in 1823 by Noah Porter, it is both the oldest lighthouse still in operation on the Eastern Coast of the United States and the shortest lighthouse on the North Carolina coast. It is so small, in fact, that it can't be seen from more than 14 miles away.

While lighthouses are, and have been, instrumental in safely steering myriad craft safely through these treacherous waters, no lighthouse could have saved the *HMC Bedfordshire* when a German submarine torpedoed it on May 14, 1942. The ship sank and all hands were lost. Four bodies, only two of which could be identified, subsequently washed onto the Ocracoke

shore. These sailors were buried in what to this day is a well-tended graveyard surrounded by a white picket fence. The graves are marked by bronze plaques on concrete crosses. This **British Cemetery** stands as a memorial to the British Royal Navy – a curious bit of Blighty in North Carolina!

Ocracoke's herd of wild ponies, dubbed the **Banker Ponies**, will fascinate equestrian lovers. Their origins are disputed, although some historians believe that they descended from the ponies that came ashore with the Raleigh expeditions and were left on Roanoke Island when the Lost Colony mysteriously disappeared. Visitors can get a closer look on the north of the island, where many are corralled and cared for by the National Park Service.

Although the dastardly pirate Blackbeard has long ago gone to his eternal unrest, his legend lives on in Ocracoke Village. If you want to learn more about the man and his exploits, head to **Teach's Hole – Blackbeard Exhibit and Pyrate Specialty Shoppe**, ☎ 252-928-1718. George and Mickey Roberson founded this establishment in 1992, with the stated intention of educating the public about Blackbeard through numerous exhibits. The shoppe itself, as might well be expected, features anything and everything to do with piracy. The opening hours are Monday through Saturday from 10 am to 6 pm in the summer and from 11 am to 5 pm in the winter.

Sweet Dreams

The **Berkley Manor Bed & Breakfast**, ☎ 252-928-5911, 800-832-1223, e-mail berkley@beachlink.com, www.berkleymanor.com, Silver Lake Road, enjoys a prime location just across, but concealed from, the harbor. On a first research trip here in late 1997, we were impressed by the manor's unusual façade with high central tower and its lovely private grounds, but far less impressed with the interior. We were a bit dubious when, on a subsequent trip in early 1999, we were emphatically encouraged to take a look at the Berkley Manor. Allowing for the fact that things change, we determined to make a return visit. And,

what we found behind the still-impressive exterior was a change indeed. We learned that, in the intervening period, the property had been purchased by an energetic and innovative young couple, Robert and Amy Attaway, who have metamorphosed a rather dowdy place into one with an interesting and lively ambiance. The four-story tower is the focal point of the house, and from its comfortable lounges it offers marvelous vistas of the island. Each of the 12 guest rooms has been individually designed with a decidedly Caribbean flair. Eight of these, designated Standard Accommodations, have private bath, TV, telephone and individual climate control. The other four, designated Luxury Accommodations, offer more space, private bath, and luxury bedding, with two having a private two-person Jacuzzi tub. Rates are confused by multiple seasons and room variations, with Standard Rooms varying between $75 and $135 and Luxury Rooms costing $125-$175. As the name implies, rates include breakfast – a gourmet treat. Speaking of the rates, we should advise you that this is a non-smoking establishment and, if you are found to have been smoking in your room, you can expect an extra $200 cleaning charge on your bill.

The **Anchorage Inn & Marina**, ☎ 252-928-1101, e-mail info@theanchorageinn.com, is an impressively designed four-story, soon to be five-story, structure. As the name indicates, it is just across the road from the marina. Their website is www.theanchorageinn.com. There are 34 guest rooms, a mix of smoking and non-smoking, with modern décor and the expected amenities of cable TV and telephone. The inn has fabulous views out over the harbor – especially of the sun as it sizzles into the horizon above Pamlico Sound. Again, rates vary according to season and room choice, but expect to pay somewhere between $79 and $125 a night.

Our Suggestion: As you read this, construction should be complete on a fifth-floor conversion that will see the creation of a number of two-bedroom, two-bath suites, each with full kitchen, washer/dryer and even more glorious panoramic vistas. The management projects that these will rent for around $250 per night.

A Continental breakfast is complimentary. The pool – located on the harbor – is open from 9 am till dark, and bicycle rentals are available at the marina.

The **Ocracoke Harbor Inn**, ☎ 252-928-5731 or 888-456-1998, Silver Lake Road, opened in 1998 and found just across the harbor from the center of the village, has 16 guest roomsand seven suites. Each is nicely appointed with either two queen-sized beds or one king-sized bed, and features cable TV, telephone with modem port, coffeemaker and refrigerator. Most romantic, though, is a suite with private porch, king-sized bed, private bath with two-person Jacuzzi, and kitchenette with a full-size refrigerator and microwave oven. Summer and spring/fall rates are governed by floor, with first-floor accommodations ranging between $60 and $95 and second-floor accommodations from $70 to $105. Suites, on the higher floors, run from $109 to $170. In the winter, rooms, whatever the floor, cost between $49 and $79, with suites priced at $90-$125. A Continental breakfast, included in the rates, is served each morning, weather permitting, on the waterfront deck; bikes are available for hire and outdoor charcoal grills are on-site for those with a mind to barbecue.

Tables for Two

The **Cockle Creek Restaurant**, ☎ 252-928-6891, www.cocklecreek.com, on Highway 12 just outside of the village proper and operated by native islanders David and Kari Styron, is considered one of the finest eateries on Ocracoke. A rather unusual layout has been used to full advantage to provide spa-

cious dining rooms upstairs and down, and to incorporate a long and semi-private bar. The menu is tasty, too. Begin with appetizers like Crab Stuffed Mushrooms, fresh mushroom caps stuffed with lump crabmeat and topped with mozzarella cheese, or Crab Balls, a smaller version of their homemade crab cakes, lightly fried (each at $6.95). Although there are selections labelled "Beef & Poultry from the Grill" and "Pasta and for the Light Appetite," most will be drawn to the extensive array of seafood dishes. We particularly liked the look of Scallops St. Charles, fresh scallops oven-sautéed, topped with cream sauce and a sprinkle of parmesan cheese ($13.95); Fresh Salmon & Crabmeat offers North Atlantic salmon wrapped in bacon, flame grilled, topped with sautéed crabmeat and served with white wine Hollandaise sauce ($16.95); or Stuffed Shrimp, fresh local shrimp butterflied and stuffed with a house crab cake mixture and then broiled ($16.95). The wine list is primarily American, but has some international flavors, and a few are available by the glass. It is open for dinner, seven days a week, from 5 to 9:30 pm.

The **Café Atlantic**, ☎ 252-928-4861, just across from the Cockle Street on the northern edge of Ocracoke Village, is housed in a structure that reflects the character of the region. Among the appetizers (all seafood-based), the Mussels Marinière (offered in season only), 12 fresh mussels steamed in white wine, butter, garlic and herbs, and the Clams Casino, half a dozen clams, broiled with bacon, Swiss cheese and garlic butter (each $5.95), are particularly interesting. Pastas, which are served with a garden salad, fresh vegetable and hot roll, include the very interesting Caciucco, an Italian seafood stew made with a variety of fresh seafoods in a light tomato and clam broth served over linguine ($15.95). Of the entrées, we suggest the Seafood Kabobs, fresh fish, shrimp, scallops and vegetables grilled over an open flame, and Beef and Shrimp Kabobs, marinated and grilled over an open flame with mushrooms and peppers (each $15.95). The Café Atlantic has an extensive wine list, and is open for lunch, daily, from 11 am to 3pm and for dinner, daily, from 5:30 pm 9:30 pm. Sunday brunch, a favorite with the locals, is served from 11 am to 3 pm.

Shops, Spas, etc.

The main attraction on Ocracoke, a slow rhythm of life that beats in tune with nature, isn't conducive to the more sophisticated loving touches. The many local shops are delightful, but, as the village is so small, we will leave it for you to ferret those out for yourselves. We would suggest that, if you have your heart set on a special bottle of wine or champagne, you procure those before getting on the ferry. While spirits, beer and wine are available, the selection is limited.

Safari So Good

She's from Venus. Her idea of a romantic weekend is the B&B experience – a comfy bed, fluffy towels, a bowl and pitcher for washing up bedside, a gourmet breakfast and a candlelit dinner. He's from Mars. His idea of a romantic weekend is getting back to nature – sleeping in the open air, serenaded by a chorus of crickets, taking an invigorating hike and sharing s'mores around the campfire. They agree on stargazing. So where on earth will they find a compromise? Believe it or not, about 20 miles north of Asheville, NC. Here, on a lush mountainside near the Blue Ridge Parkway, is an ultra-romantic weekend destination best described as an outdoor bed & breakfast, where (without the shots, the jet lag, the expense, or even a passport) you and your lover may embark on an unforgettable **Southern Safari**, PO Box 8237, Asheville, NC 28814, ☎ 828-626-3400 or 800-454-7374, fax 828-626-3402, www.southernsafari.com.

This very unusual enterprise is the brainchild of energetic and well-traveled dreamer, Bart Ely. With a quiver full of memories of his African and Australian safaris, Bart set about to create in the States a similarly exotic experience – where the focus would be on leisurely days spent relishing the joys of nature, comfortable base camps, gourmet meals, and sophisticated and attentive service. For the site he chose the incredibly beau-

tiful Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina, and what his imagination has wrought is, in a word, incredible.

Perched on the edge of a mountainside with glorious vistas is a luxurious base camp – Kariba – with elaborate outdoor accommodations. Upon elevated platforms, beneath tightly stretched tarp roofs, are tents as big as some resort cottages, appointed with fully made-up beds, rattan bedside tables with battery-operated lamps, a pitcher and basin for washing up and fluffy towels for drying. A cedar deck extends onto a covered porch furnished with lounge chairs and overlooking the verdant forest.

Meals are sumptuous and elegantly served. A hearty Continental breakfast of homemade muffins, fresh fruit, yogurt, juice and freshly ground coffee is, weather permitting, served al fresco. A candlelit dinner, prepared by Southern Safari's French Canadian chef and presented on the camp's best china, is taken in the charmingly elegant dining tent. Those who have their hearts set on typical camp fare – freeze dried mystery meals, hot dogs or chili – will be disappointed. The appetizer might be a Fruit and Cheese Board or Sesame Chicken Strips with honey and ginger glaze. A salad follows, perhaps a Mixed Organic Green Salad, with carrots, tomatoes and cucumber, honey mustard and yogurt dressing or Avocado, Greens and Canteloupe, served with fresh-baked bread and farm fresh butter. There is usually a choice of two entrées, maybe Lemon Roasted Chicken or Petite Filet of Beef with Bordelaise Sauce, each served with roasted new potatoes and julienne vegetables, or Stir-Fried Chicken and Shrimp, tempered with mango salsa and served with herbed couscous. Dessert, if you have saved room, could be a Chocolate Walnut Torte, with raspberry glaze and fresh whipped cream, or huckleberries and nectarines with thick yogurt. All are accompanied by South African wine – your choice of red or white. And, before retiring, there is the magic found only around the glow of a campfire – complete with singing and s'mores. The service is superlative. Attentive staff provide everything from heated water for washing to cocoa for sipping by the fire. Bart was once known to make an un-

scheduled trek to town in response to a guest's desire for "something chocolate." They got Godiva truffles!

So, what do you do during the day at Southern Safari – besides the obvious? You name it, literally – from the rugged to the refined. In their words, "just tell them what you want . . . and sit back and enjoy while they make it happen." Just some of the options:

- ❒ hiking treks – ranging from easy to advanced
- ❒ white water rafting on the French Broad or Nolichucky River
- ❒ horseback riding
- ❒ rock climbing – indoor instruction and outdoor at one of many fabulous sites
- ❒ mountain biking – bike and helmet included
- ❒ fly-fishing in scenic mountain streams, clinic and license included
- ❒ llama trekking, gourmet lunch included
- ❒ hot air ballooning
- ❒ historic motor tours
- ❒ a tour of The Biltmore House and grounds, picnic lunch included
- ❒ craft tours – meeting local painters, blacksmiths, sculptors, glassblowers, jewelry designers and weavers in their studios
- ❒ and door-to-door shopping tours at Asheville's most unusual stores, galleries and boutiques.

You can create your special day from any combination of these activities or devise a few of your own. And, regardless of your preferences, you will have at your disposal the expertise of Southern Safari guides. Each is certified in Red Cross CPR and First Aid and authorized under permit of the US Forest Service, is well versed in native flora and wildlife, and is knowledgeable in local cultural and artistic offerings. What's more, they will happily amend any schedule to suit your interests,

with a stated goal of making your trip "unforgettable, delectable and comfortable... based on your personal interests."

The number of packages on offer is staggering. We will highlight below the most popular with the prices quoted per couple.

- Southern Safari Only includes an overnight stay at the base camp ($145 without dinner, $245 with dinner).
- Overnight Stay with Guide Service includes the foregoing, with personalized guide service the next day for any combination of hiking, crafts and shopping tours, and scenic motoring excursions ($295 without dinner, $395 with dinner).
- There are two categories of Adventure Activity Packages. Activity Group #1 includes an overnight stay, one activity from among whitewater rafting, indoor rock climbing, horseback riding, mountain biking or llama trekking, and a boxed lunch ($285 without dinner, $385 with dinner). Activity Group #2 includes overnight stay, one activity from among hot air ballooning, outdoor rock climbing and half-day fly-fishing, and a boxed lunch ($395 without dinner, $495 with dinner).
- The Mountains-to-Sea Trail Trekking Tour, led by Alan Householder, the first person to have through-hiked the entire 87-mile trail from Clingman's Dome in the mountains to Jockey's Ridge on the Outer Banks, includes two nights accommodation at the base camp, all meals, shuttle to and from the camp and guide service for a 7.3-mile hike on Day 1 and a 10.7-mile hike to the summit of Mount Mitchell (6,684 ft.) on Day 2 ($640).

In addition, there are two packages definitely designed with romance in mind – the Hot Springs Package and the Honeymoon/Anniversary Package. The itinerary of the former is as follows. Day One – arrival at base camp, a late afternoon hike, a brisk solar shower, a glass of South African wine, followed by gourmet dinner, an evening around the campfire, then away to ro-

mance and sweet dreams in your private tent/lodge; Day Two – hearty Continental breakfast, whitewater rafting, excursion to Hot Springs Spa (private Jacuzzi soak in mineral water and relaxing massage), gourmet dinner, campfire time and slumber; Day Three – breakfast served on the sunny deck, shopping at area craft shops and, finally and reluctantly, the trip home. The price is $690. Finally, the Honeymoon/Anniversary Package (appropriate at any time for the truly romantic) includes two nights accommodation in the specially decorated Honeymoon Tent/Lodge, gourmet dinner each night and Continental breakfast each morning, one full day of whitewater rafting with lunch, a "Celebration Hot Air Balloon Ride" with champagne, all transportation to and from activities during your stay, and memories to last a lifetime. The rate is $1,200.

Before booking, be advised of the following policies. While Southern Safari guides are highly trained professionals and all care is taken to ensure the safety of guests, each person is required to sign a waiver of liability before utilizing the Safari services. It is extremely important that you apprise your guide of any personal physical challenges or limitations prior to undertaking an activity. Outdoor activities short-circuited by inclement weather will be substituted with indoor endeavors such as crafts and shopping tours, scenic driving excursions and indoor rock climbing. No refund will be given for weather conditions. A 50% deposit is required at the time of booking and a full refund is given only when reservations are canceled at least 30 days in advance.

Things to Do

The Hot Springs Spa

Your interest may have been piqued by the mention above of an excursion to The Hot Springs Spa. Let us elaborate. Nestled among the highest peaks of the Appalachian range, where the Blue Ridge Mountains meet The Great Smokey Mountains, is a breathtakingly beautiful thousand-acre plateau, encircled and sheltered by lofty peaks. Upon this plain, at the point where

the swiftly moving Spring Creek bursts through the mountains to unite with the French Broad River, mother nature has poured forth from deep inside her bosom a blessing known as The Hot Springs.

Since their discovery over two centuries ago, mankind has marveled at the efficacy of this mineral-laden water – a potent tonic that gurgles forth at a constant temperature of 100° F. Not for lack of trying. Scientists have been unable to replicate her recipe and, indeed, are at a loss to explain its subtle curative powers. It is impossible to deny, however, the myriad testimonials by visitors and doctors alike of relief (sometimes miraculous cures) from rheumatism, arthritis, gout, sciatica, joint diseases, anemia, digestive maladies, and liver and gallbladder ailments. All apparently result from both soaking in and drinking the waters. In fact, the waters are high in magnesia (as in milk of), iron, silica, alumina, potassium, sodium, ammonia and lime – all ingredients used in prescription drugs to cure a variety of ailments. And, of course, the restful nature of the lush surrounding countryside, verdant in spring and kaleidoscopic in the fall, along with the fresh mountain air, offer therapeutic benefits of their own.

Many with an entrepreneurial spirit have sought to capitalize upon this natural phenomenon. As early as 1788, Gaser Dugg ran a tavern on the property and later a number of hotels/inns serviced the site. In 1977, the final hotel to occupy the property, the Hot Springs Hotel, succumbed to fire. The property and the Springs were purchased by Eugene and Anne Hicks in 1990, and, just one year later, the Hot Mineral Water Baths and Massage opened, followed in succession over the next eight years by an RV park, campground, camp store, golf driving range and, finally, a handful of primitive camping cabins. The main attractions, though, are eight mineral baths. The hot natural mineral water from the spring is constantly pumped into Jacuzzi tubs built into wooden decks. These are attractively landscaped in secluded, private outdoor settings, offering glorious views of Spring Creek, the French Broad River and the surrounding mountains. And you can drink to your health from a thermos of the same mineral water, refreshingly chilled, pro-

vided beside each bath. What's more, six massage rooms adjacent to the spa are staffed with nationally certified massage therapists, dedicated to working out any kinks that remain after an hour-long soak.

Hours of operation in season – mid-February to November 30 – are 9 am to 11 pm, seven days a week. During the winter season – December 1 through mid-February, and weather permitting, the baths are open on weekends only, between the hours of 11 am and 11 pm. Prices are set according to the time of visit within two schedule blocks. Between the hours of 9 am and 6:45 pm, couples will pay $15 per hour. Between 7 and 11 pm, the price increases to $25 per couple. Rates for a massage, arranged by advance appointment only, are $30 per person for a half-hour, $50 per person for an hour and $70 per person for 1½ hours.

The **Hot Springs Spa and Campground** is 33 miles northwest of Asheville, on Highways 25/70. Reservations may be made by calling ☎ 704-622-7676 or 800-462-0933, or fax 704-622-7615. You can also write 315 Bridge Street, PO Box 428, Hot Springs, NC 28743-0428, or e-mail info@hotspringsspanc.com. Alternatively, make a virtual visit at www.hotspringsspanc.com. And, if you find traditional camping romantic, you might consider an overnight stay at the campground. The sites here are large and shaded, the camping facilities are comprehensive (hot showers, clean restrooms, pavilion and camp store), and some tent sites have both electric and water supplies.

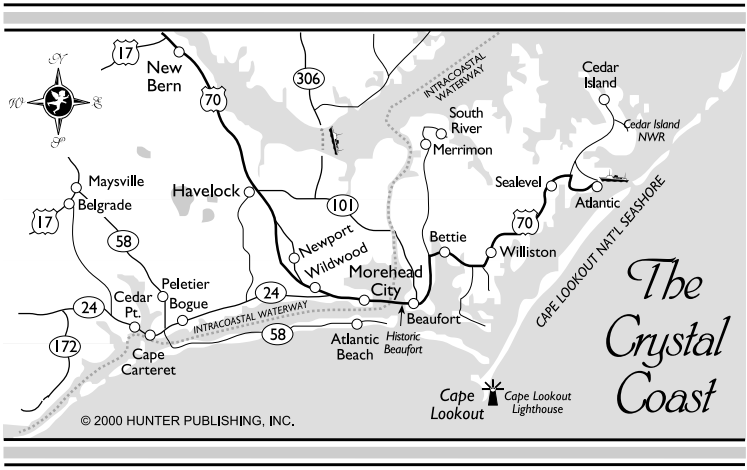
Herb of Grace

In 11th-century Europe, pilgrims en route to medieval monasteries nurtured their bodies and refreshed their souls at sanctuaries such as England's Herb of Grace. Today, visitors to the majestic Appalachian Mountains will find a similar botanical paradise, unspoiled by technology, in a mystic garden showcase named for its legendary predecessor – the Herb of Grace, 1951 North Carolina Highway 63, Hot Springs, NC 28743, ☎/fax 828-622-7319. Here, proprietors Bobbie and John Cyphers maintain three acres of glorious gardens and hillside

vineyards. They manage a nursery that specializes in antique and English roses, exceptional clematis, herbs, perennials, heathers, hydrangeas, dwarf conifers and other varieties, offering a garden and design consulting service. In the charming French-style shop you will be tempted by the array of European and locally crafted art, heirlooms, linen, porcelain, jewelry, candles, oils, soaps, books, garden art, glass cloches, antiques and garden supplies. Also on-site is a thriving conservation farm that grows many varieties of heirloom fruits and vegetables, and is home to both angora goats and Old-Breed chickens. A stroll in the colorful gardens here is simply enchanting, especially when followed by English, French or cream tea served on the veranda. Herb of Grace is reached from Asheville by taking Highway 63 west 25 miles over Doggett Mountain. Opening hours are March through December, Wednesday through Saturday, from 10 am to 6 pm and Sunday, from noon to 5 pm. At other times, visits may be arranged by appointment.

Gourmet Gardens Herb Farm

Continuing in the gardening vein, but with the emphasis more on edibles than ornamentation, is Marla and Dan Murphy's Gourmet Gardens Herb Farm, found off Exit 4A of I-240 at 14 Banks Town Road, Weaverville, NC 28787, ☎ 828-658-0766. You can begin by strolling hand-in-hand through the herb, culinary and everlasting gardens, recording with your camera those ideas that inspire you. Next, investigate the greenhouse with its 500-plus different herbs and over 60 varieties of geraniums. Afterwards, take a leisurely browse in the quaint shop which specializes in herbal and medicinal teas, herb mixtures, dressings, vinegars and seeds, herbal jellies, and herbal soups special seasonings. They also have a wide array of kitchen paraphernalia and cookbooks, a smattering of home décor items fashioned of herbs and flowers, and a collection of paintings and watercolors. In-season hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 9:30 am to 5:30 pm, and Sunday, 10 am to 4 pm. Out of season, December 1 through March 15, visits are by appointment only. There is no charge for admission.



The Crystal Coast

The Crystal Coast, also known as the Southern Outer Banks, runs along the central coastline of North Carolina. Although not among the best-known resort areas on the Atlantic Ocean, the combination of history, quaint towns and white, sandy beaches is, indeed, alluring. Geographically, too, it is unusual. The 30-mile length of Bogue Banks shares, with Long Island, NY, the distinction of being one of only two coastlines on the Atlantic Ocean that run east to west and face south.

We found the town of **Beaufort** (pronounced Boh-fort), just across the sound on the mainland, to be one of the more pleasant discoveries we made while researching this guide. Both historic and charming, it has its fair share of visitors, yet it remains very much unspoiled. Particularly tempting are the numerous maritime excursions that set sail from the boardwalk to the small, neighboring islands. You can visit **Carrot Island**, now part of the **Rachel Carson Estuarine Reserve**, a tidal complex in the state estuary system established to protect the fragile ecology. Home to more than 160 species of feathered friends, it is a bird-lover's paradise. On **Shackleford Banks**, comprehensive preservation efforts ensure that wild ponies run free and that dolphins, sea turtles and rare waterfowl

thrive. Alternatively, take the ferry to **Cape Lookout**, where tranquil seclusion and an historic lighthouse await.

History

Established as a fishing village in the 17th century, Beaufort, the state's third oldest town, was surveyed in 1713, many years before George Washington's birth and when Anne still reigned as Queen of England. It was incorporated just 10 years later and, since that time, has continued as the seat of Carteret County. Named after Henry Somerset, Duke of Beaufort, its rich history is recalled today in the street names: Ann Street, in honor of Queen Anne; Craven Street, after the Earl of Craven; Moore Street, for Colonel Maurice Moore, a South Carolinian who granted aid during the Indian Wars; Pollock Street, after a governor of the time; Turner Street, for Robert Turner, owner of the land that was then surveyed; and Orange Street, for William, Prince of Orange, who later would become William III of England.

The Crystal Coast Today

The **Historic District of Beaufort**, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, boasts over 100 private homes, each displaying a plaque with the date of its construction. The Beaufort Historical Association operates the Historic Beaufort Site, which is comprised of seven period homes and public buildings that are open to the public. More on these later.

A bit to the east, and across a pair of bridges, is a town with a different, and decidedly more modern, character. **Morehead City** is one of only two deepwater port cities in North Carolina. Vessels from the world over negotiate the three miles from the sea through Beaufort Inlet to arrive at the Morehead City docks. This port is also the arrival and departure point for the Second Division of the US Marine Corps, based at nearby Camp Lejeune. The waterfront at Morehead City is famed for boat-to-table seafood restaurants, fish markets where buyers

inspect the catch as it is landed, charter fishing boats for those angling to catch a trophy, and cruise boats that afford closer investigation of the neighboring islands.

Morehead City is the easternmost for the two entry points to the 30-mile **Bogue Banks**, a beach-lovers paradise. **Atlantic Beach**, immediately across the bridge, is the most commercial of the areas here. To its east, at the tip of this narrow island and providing a stark contrast, is the historic **Fort Macon State Park**. Following Highway 58 west from Atlantic City, you will find a handful of small communities, easy access to a host of public beaches, and two places of particular interest. As on the Outer Banks, addresses are designated by a mile marker number indicating the number of miles you travel along the main road (here, Highway 58), from a point of origin at number 0, to reach your destination.

At Mile Marker 4 is **Pine Knoll Shores**, bequeathed to the children of Theodore Roosevelt by Alice Hoffman, owner of the island between 1918 and 1953. In consideration of its spectacular location in a maritime forest, wedged between oceanside dunes and the Bogue Sound, the Roosevelt children developed Pine Shores in a manner so as to create minimal disturbance to the island's natural dynamics. Consequently, this is one of the state's most ecologically sensitive towns. Interestingly, just off the coast at Pine Knoll Shores and visible at low tide is the wreck of the 500-ton Confederate blockade-runner ***Pevensey***, run aground by a Federal Navy vessel in 1864.

At Mile Marker 7 is the intersection that leads to the **North Carolina Aquarium**. Pause a moment to read the plaque which will tell you that this was among the first landing sites for a European explorer in the New World.

At the western end of Bogue Banks another bridge takes you across Bogue Sound and back to the mainland. Before taking Highway 24 back to Morehead City, a short detour leads to the very quaint town of **Swansboro**, formerly Swannsborough. First settled around 1730 upon the site of an Algonquin Indian village, the town was incorporated 53 years later and named in honor of former speaker of the North Carolina House of Com-

mons, Samuel Swann. It soon became a major shipbuilding center. In fact, the *Prometheus*, the first steamboat constructed in North Carolina, was fashioned here.

The town prospered until the end of the Civil War. After that it declined with the shipbuilding industry and the Great Depression hit it particularly hard. Again, its seaside location proved advantageous and Swansboro survived through its development of a commercial fishing industry. Business from local Marine Corps bases, Camp Lejeune and Cherry Hill, brought renewed economic growth during the Second World War. Happily, progress has not detracted from Swansboro's unique ambiance – it retains the charm of a picturesque Colonial port.

No history of the Crystal Coast would be complete without a mention of Blackbeard, the fiercest pirate of them all. He left many disasters and legends in his wake when he rampaged through this region in the early 18th century. His first name was Edward. There is, however, considerable doubt as to his last name. It has been recorded as Teach, Thatch, Tatch or even Tache, although an anchorage inside Ocracoke Inlet confidently bears the name "Teach's Hole." It is believed that he was born in Bristol, England around 1680, and that he served in Queen Anne's War, fought between England and Spain from 1702 to 1713.

Following that war Blackbeard joined up with the pirate crew of Captain Benjamin Hornigold, who operated out of New Providence in the Bahamas. In 1717, he captured the French slave ship, *Concorde*, off St. Vincent Island in the Caribbean and took command of the vessel, deeming it his flagship and renaming it *Queen Anne's Revenge*. In May of the following year, he made what was perhaps his most audacious attack, raiding Charleston, South Carolina, then the busiest and most important port in the Southern Colonies. He met his end, violently as might be expected, when a military force commissioned by two American colonies lured him into battle off Ocracoke Island on Friday, November 22, 1718.

Throughout the succeeding centuries many efforts were undertaken to locate the remains of the *Queen Anne's Revenge*, but all without success. The tide of fortune changed in 1996 when a

private research firm, Intersal, Inc., discovered a shipwreck near Beaufort Inlet. Since that date, many artifacts have been recovered from the wreck and, although ongoing scientific studies continue, it is thought probable that this is, indeed, what remains of Blackbeard's flagship.

Things to Do

Beaufort

We will start our tour in fascinating Beaufort or, as it also known, Old Beaufort-By-The Sea. You won't have to look very far to find history here, and almost every street has a story to tell.

Stop in at the **Beaufort Historical Association**, ☎ 252-728-5225, 800-575 SITE (7483), fax 728-4966, at 138 Turner Street, e-mail bha@bmd.clis.com. A stop at the Association is an absolute must. It is open year-round from 9:30 am to 5:30 pm and, between April and October, also on Sunday from 1 to 5 pm. The Beaufort Historic Site oversees the operation of the two-acre Historic Site, which includes eight historic buildings – six of them restored, dating from 1732 to 1859. To learn more details about this fascinating small town, avail yourselves of one of the guided tours that depart from the Association building at 10 am, 11:30, 1 and 3 pm year-round. Also on offer between April and October are tours of the Old Burying Ground, English Double-Decker Bus Tours of the Historic District, Architectural Walking Tours and Special Civil War Bus Tours. Times, however, may vary and it is best to call the Association for schedules. Check their websites at www.nccoastonline.com/bha or www.blackbeardthepirate.com.

Among the special events they sponsor throughout the year are the Publick Day – Colonial Market Day on the third Saturday in April; the Old Homes Tour & Antiques Show and Sale held on the last weekend in June; the Community Thanksgiving Feast on the Sunday before Thanksgiving; and the Coastal Carolina Christmas Celebration on the second weekend in December. Before leaving the site, stop by the **Old Beaufort Gift**

Shop, which has books, maps, and a variety of other items that make excellent souvenirs and gifts.

Even if you have foregone the formal tour, you will want to visit the **Old Burying Ground** on Ann Street. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, it dates from 1731 and is the final resting place for many local legends. Stick close to one another, though. With its ancient head stones and overhanging oak trees you may get spooked.

On the nearby Beaufort waterfront is another attraction that celebrates local traditions – the **North Carolina Maritime Museum**, ☎ 252-728-7317 or www.ah.dcr.state.nc.us/maritime/default.htm. It's at 315 Front Street and is of an all-wood cedar shake design reflecting both 19th-century Beaufort styles and early US Lifesaving Service buildings. Its exhibits chronicle the maritime and natural histories of the North Carolina coast and that of the US Lifesaving service. Among the displays are full-sized working watercraft, ship models, decoys, tools, fossils, shells, coastal plant and animal life and salt water aquariums. Across the street, but still on the waterfront, is the museum-run **Harvey W. Smith Watercraft Center**. This is a working boat shop, where visitors can view the construction and restoration of wooden boats. It also sponsors a small craft research program dedicated to the preservation of the history of boats and boat building in North Carolina. The museum proper is open Monday through Friday from 9 am to 5 pm, Saturday from 10 am to 5 pm and Sunday from 1 to 5 pm. The Watercraft Center observes basically the same hours, except that it is closed on Monday.

Boating, of course, remains one of the main attractions of the Crystal Coast, and the opportunies for firsthand experience on the Beaufort waterfront are many.

Yachts call up the romance of seafaring. From Beaufort, between late spring and fall, couples can take to the Intracoastal Waterway on the *Good Fortune*, a Dutch custom-built 42-foot yacht. **Coastal Ecology Sails**, ☎ 252-242-3860, based at 1307 Shepard Street, Morehead City, NC 28557, is piloted by Captain Ron White, a marine biologist/diving instructor. Started in

Key West in 1979, this is the oldest sailing charter operation in the Eastern United States, and has been sailing out of Beaufort since 1981. In the winter months, though, you will find Captain White either in the Florida Keys or in the Bahamas. Although the *Good Fortune* can accommodate up to six passengers, the romantically inclined will want to share only with one another. Therefore, all prices quoted here are for couples only. No matter which option you choose, book early to avoid disappointment.

For nature lovers, we recommend the 2½-hour Dolphin Watch. Even if the creatures don't surface, you will enjoy both the ride and the informative running commentary. The cost is $50. At a slightly higher cost of $60, but ever so much more romantic, is the Sunset Sail, also 2½ hours. The main attractions on this trip are the scenery and the ambiance. Champagne, wine, beer and soft drinks are complimentary. Finally, consider booking a full day of sailing adventure aboard the *Good Fortune* for a very reasonable $280. Captain White will set sail for Cape Lookout, where you can spend your time snorkeling (equipment is provided), swimming, shelling or merely lazing around. Whatever you choose to do, you will have the personal attention of the Captain and the advantage of his vast reservoir of knowledge. You will become acquainted also with the First Mate, Lt. Willis, whose duty it is to spot the dolphins and whales. He has even been known to jump overboard and swim with the creatures himself, or to dive for shells. Best not to trust his navigating abilities though. Lt. Willis, you see, is a golden labrador!

Cruises of a similar type, but taken aboard a stable and comfortable 45-foot catamaran, are offered by **Lookout Cruises**, ☎ 252-504-SAIL, www.lookoutcruises.com. Each day between the Memorial Day weekend and October 1, they offer the following. From 9:30 to 11:30 am, at a cost of $18, the AM Dolphin Watch will carry you to the Newport River approach to Beaufort, where you can watch these fascinating creatures cavort in the shallows. Next in line is the Cape Lookout Cruise. Departing at midday and returning six hours later, it takes you on a six-mile cruise in each direction, and allows you time to swim, snorkel, sunbathe or simply to walk along the unspoiled beach.

The $49 fare includes lunch and refreshments. An hour after the catamaran returns, at 7 pm, the ship leaves on a 1½-hour Sunset Cruise, priced at $20 per person. This takes place five nights a month, during the full moon, Lookout also operates – you guessed it – a Moonlight Cruise. This departs at 9 pm, returns at 10:30, and costs $20 per person, including complimentary beer, wine and soft drinks. Lookout Cruises are US Coast Guard-approved for up to 42 passengers, and all rates are per-person.

Whether you are a beginner or a seasoned paddler, kayaking is always fun, and **Coastal Carolina Kayak Tours**, ☎ 252-728-7070, e-mail hollie@coastalkayak.com, or on the web at www.coastalkayak.com, is your ticket to kayaking adventure on the Crystal Coast. It's on Front Street across from the NC Maritime Museum, If you prefer to explore on your own, kayaks are available for rent at $10 an hour, $30 a half-day or $55 a day, per person. If, on the other hand, you want an organized adventure, there are several options. For $5 per person, you can head out to Carrot Island/Sand Dollar; or, for $20 more you can take your choice of either Bear Island or the Shackleford Banks. Cape Lookout is another popular destination, but it is a long way to paddle. Never fear. For this trip, kayaks are loaded onto a 45-foot catamaran for transport and, once there, you can paddle the waters searching for dolphin, sea turtles and other wildlife. All rates include the use of kayak, paddling gear and instruction, with some tours having a catered lunch.

In direct contrast to the deep sea fishing charters sailing from Morehead City, **Captain Dave Dietzler's Fly Fishing & Light Tackle Charters**, ☎/fax 252-240-2850, 242 Brant Landing Road, Newport, NC, depart from Beaufort, working the local waters on excursions classified by season.

In March and April, at $425 for a full day and $250 for a half-day, the Captain will take you in search of albacore and bonito. From the last week of April through May, at $400 for a full day or $250 for a half-day, the Roanoke River stripers are biting – maybe as many as 100 of them in a day. May through December is the season for wreck fishing. At $500 for a full day or $300 for a half-day, you will be angling for king mackerel, bonito, barra-

cuda or sharks. Whichever you hook, you are guaranteed a good fight. In the period from May to October, redfish occupy waters so shallow that you can actually watch them swim beneath the boat and make a game of picking out the fish you want to catch. A full day will cost you $400 or a half-day $250. July through November, the sport fishing on the Crystal Coast is superb, but forget the frying pan and take the camera, as these trips are catch and release only. July, August and September in the southwest corner of Pamlico Sound, the hunt is on for giant red drum, which can weigh 30-50 lbs. In July and August, Pamlico Sound is also the place to fish for 70-100-lb. tarpon. During October and November, shoals of thousands of false albacore, also known as "Fat Alberts," arrive at Cape Lookout. Average weights are eight to 18 lbs., but some world-record fish of over 20 lbs. have been caught each year. The preceding three trips are offered as day-long outings only, the first two at $500, the latter at $100. December and January trips are not inexpensive, $600 for a half-day, but, with a little luck, that may buy you a lot of tuna fish. Giant bluefin tuna will weigh in at an average of 400 to 600 lbs. The fishing is done within a mile off the beach, sometimes in just 15 feet of water. And, incidentally, this is one time when two can live as cheaply as one. Prices are for one or two people. Whatever season you visit, you can rely on Captain Dave for an adventure you will not soon forget.

For a different perspective on the Crystal Coast, contact **East Air**, ☎ 252-728-2323 or fax 728-6706 at the Michael J. Smith Field Airport in Beaufort. Any one of their three sightseeing flights will give a spectacular bird's eye perspective. The Cape Lookout Tour, lasting 30 minutes and costing $65, will wing you over Morehead City, Atlantic Beach, Fort Macon, Shackelford Island and the Cape Lookout Lighthouse. The Beach and Bank Tour, 15 minutes longer and $20 more, flies you over Atlantic Beach and as far as Emerald Isle. The Inland Tour, 40 minutes and costing $80, is, to our minds, not as interesting. As the name implies, you don't get to see much sea.

Morehead City

As you cross the causeway between Morehead City and Atlantic Beach you will see, on your left, the **Capt. Stacy Fishing Center**, ☎ 252-247-7501 or 800-533-9417 – *the* place to go to for deep-sea fishing. Available for charter are a multitude of boats, from 34 feet to 54 feet in length and with state-of-the-art electronics. Each is piloted by an experienced captain and highly capable mates. Take your choice of a Full-Day Troll, looking for tuna, dolphin, wahoo, king mackerel, sailfish and marlin, or Full-Day Bottom Fishing, aiming to snare red and silver snapper, grouper, trigger fish and others. Both of these depart around 5 am and arrive back sometime close to 5 pm. Prices, including bait, ice and all tackle, range between $650 and $1,100 for up to six people. If this is too much, then consider a Half-Day Troll, for approximately five hours. January through March is the season for Special Giant Blue Tuna Fishing, at around $1,000 for a full day. If you get lucky (as you should), fish cleaning is available for 40¢ per lb., with tuna, wahoo, dolphin and kings being filleted or steaked and all bottom fish filleted and skinned.

Atlantic Beach

Across the sound is Atlantic Beach, where you may simply want to enjoy the wonderful beaches. After all, why come to the beach if you're not going to soak up a few rays?

Sailing can be a serenely romantic experience, and at **The Sailing Place**, ☎ 252-726-5664, 136 Atlantic Beach Causeway, Captain Brenton Creelman offers a choice of sailing lessons, yacht charters (with or without a captain) and an array of boat rentals. Sailboat charters range from $80 for a half-day to $275 a day, with the cost of a captain extra. Other non-powerboats, from canoes to catamarans, are also available for hire. Alternatively, if speed is your thing, powerboats can be hired for $60 for four hours or $180 for eight hours.

Back on land, there are a couple of places that just might arouse your curiosity. At the far-eastern end of Bogue Banks is the 385-acre **Fort Macon State Park**, ☎ 252-726-3775,

www.clis.com/friends, which is comprised of the fort, the swimming area and the park grounds. While all three areas are open daily, the actual hours vary. The fort and the swimming areas are open from 10 am to 5:30 pm; the park itself opens at 8:30 am each morning and closes at 9 pm from June through August, at 8 pm in September, at 7 pm in October, at 6 pm from November through February, at 7 pm in March, and at 8 pm in April and May.

The fort itself dates from 1826 and was the culmination of a string of efforts to protect the harbor of Beaufort that began in the mid-1700s. During Colonial times, Beaufort was among the first harbors designated as a port of entry, an honor that brought with it many dangers, including a vulnerability to naval attacks. Following its capture in 1747 by Spanish raiders who held the town for several days, defense was deemed a priority. Although attempts to build Fort Dobbs in 1756 never came to fruition, in 1808, over a half-century later, Fort Hampton was completed. Alas, its guardianship was short-lived, as it was destroyed by hurricane winds and floods in 1825. Construction commenced on the present structure in the following year. It was initially engineered by Robert E. Lee and it was named after Senator Nathaniel Macon of North Carolina, whose efforts funded it. The fort was garrisoned in 1834. Although Confederate forces wrestled it from Union forces at the beginning of the Civil War, the Union reclaimed it in 1862 and subsequently utilized it as a coaling station for their ships. Following the war, from 1867 to 1876, it served as a Federal prison. It was again garrisoned during the Spanish-American War, but closed in 1903. By 1923, it was considered surplus to Federal Requirements and was sold to the State of North Carolina. The price – a mere $1.

By 1934, Fort Macon had been fully restored and readied for what would be its final tour of duty, World War II. Today, the five-sided brick and stone structure, with outer walls 4½ feet thick, appears much as it did during the Civil War and is open for self-guided or tour-guided exploration.

Five miles west of Atlantic Beach at Mile Marker 7 is the entrance to the **North Carolina Aquarium** at Pine Knoll

Shores, ☎ 252-247-4003, www.aquariums.state.nc.us/Aquariums. This is one of three such facilities in the state, the others being at Roanoke Island on the Outer Banks to the north, and at Fort Fisher near Wilmington to the south. The variety of exhibits ensures that there will be something of interest for almost everyone. The Riverbank Display, with live alligators, is will stop you in your tracks. If turtles are your thing, then head for the Loggerhead Odyssey, where injured and orphaned turtles are cared for until their release back into the ocean; a turtle release trip is scheduled each May. The Touch Tank allows you to get up close and personal with common marine animals, and the Living Shipwreck, set within a 12,000-gallon display, very effectively simulates the real thing. Romantic weekenders, however, will surely be curious about the role-reversing parenting habits of the seahorses. The aquarium is open in the summer, daily, from 9 am to 7 pm, and closes at 5 pm the rest of the year.

Between Morehead City and Swansboro, at 3609 Highway 24 in Ocean, you will find the **North Carolina Coastal Federation**, ☎ 252-393-8185, a non-profit organization that works to achieve a healthy coastal environment and offers unique on-the-water experiences. These are variable, however, so call for an up-to-date schedule. The Federation also sponsors a gift shop and art gallery, featuring original coastal art, books, educational games and fine gifts – including some really nifty carved birds. It is open from Memorial Day to Labor Day, Monday through Friday, from 9 am to 5 pm; Saturday, 10 am to 4 pm.

Sweet Dreams

Atlantic Beach

A Place At The Beach, ☎ 252-247-2636, 800-334-2667 or fax 247-1067, is part of the Sands Oceanfront Rentals group. To get there, cross the bridge from Morehead City, turn left and travel about halfway along the road to Fort Macon. The address is 1090 Fort Macon Road. Each of the one- , two- or three-

bedroom apartments, designated either ocean-view or oceanfront, is pleasantly furnished and features a fully equipped kitchen and a private balcony. Prices are based on apartment size and floor plan and vary seasonally; call for current rate information. A two-bedroom oceanfront ranged from $153 (high season) and $50 (low season) recently, with an additional surcharge on holidays. On-site facilities include an indoor pool and whirlpool, an outdoor pool with a 150-foot waterslide, a game and billiard room, and outdoor grills.

The **Royal Pavilion Resort**, ☎ 252-726-5188, 800-533-3700, fax 726-9963, www.nccoast.com/royal.htm, overlooks the ocean three miles west of Morehead City at 125 Salter Path Road. Its 110 guest rooms, whether king, double, studio efficiency or specialty suite, feature island décor, microwave, refrigerator, cable TV, individual climate control, either private balcony or deck, and free local calls. Rates here also vary according to the season (of which there are six) and the location of the room. Most likely to appeal to romantic weekenders are the Poolside Suites, with rates ranging from $65 to $150, and the Oceanfront Kings, $60-$120. Rates were not yet available for new rooms outfitted with king-sized beds and Jacuzzis. These will be on the top floor of the Tower addition and should be available by the time you read this. When making your plans, be advised that, in season, there is a two-night minimum on weekends and a three-night minimum on public holidays.

The Tradewinds, an elegant but casual on-site restaurant, is open each night of the week. Pasta specialties are featured on Mondays and Tuesdays, and German cuisine on Wednesdays and Thursdays. After dinner, retire to the tropical milieu of the Passport Lounge, where an exotic drink just may set the tone for the remainder of the evening.

The **Sheraton Atlantic Beach Oceanfront Hotel**, ☎ 252-240-1155, 800-624-8875 or fax 240-1452, 2717 West Fort Macon Road, boasts a delightful location right by the beach. Each of the 200 rooms and 16 suites is well-appointed and features private balcony, microwave, refrigerator and coffeemaker. Oceanview rooms, our recommendation, rent for $49-$165, depending on the season. In addition to the Paradise

Restaurant, described in the *Tables for Two* section, you will find on-site Molly's Beachside Bar & Grill and Harry's Island Bar, which features comedians on the weekend. For your leisure, there are an indoor pool, outdoor pool, fitness center and, just outside the back door, a private 600-foot fishing pier.

Beaufort

The **Pecan Tree Inn**, ☎ 252-728-6733, 116 Queen Street, is in a delightful two-story Victorian house, easily identifiable by its verandas, turrets and gingerbread trim. In 1866 Rebecca Piggot deeded the property to the Franklin Lodge, and the first cornerstone of the present structure was laid in the middle of that same year. It served as a school building, a Sunday school, a teahouse, a doctor's office and, finally, an apartment house before a certain Mr. Hugh Jones converted it to a private residence in 1900, adding five bedrooms and three porches.

This home was state of the art – the first house in Beaufort to have gas lighting, plumbing and a telephone, although the lady of the house, Mrs. Jones, insisted that the phone be placed outside on a pine tree. She was frightened that it might be struck by lightning.

Susan and Joe Johnson purchased the house in December of 1991, and hastily set about transforming the 14 rooms into their home and the most charming of inns. The public rooms are liberally sprinkled with antiques, as are the seven very romantic guest rooms. The most discerning of visitors will opt for either the Green Room or the Bridal Suite, each of which has a king-sized cherry four-poster bed and an intimate four-by-six-foot, two-person Jacuzzi tub. These rent for $135 in season (April 1 to September 30) and $115 at other times. The other five rooms are priced from $90 to $110 in season and $70 to $90 the remainder of the year. Check out their website at www.pecantree.com,

Making the grounds really special is a lovely, 5,500-square-foot English-style flower and herb garden, designed, created and maintained by the innkeepers.

Speaking of the grounds, the Pecan Tree Inn derives its name from the 200-year-old pecan trees on the property. Native to North America, these can attain heights of 100 to 180 feet, have a trunk diameter of four to six feet, and are generally at their most productive after the age of 75 years.

The **Beaufort Inn**, ☎ 252-728-2600, 800-726-0321, www.nccoast.com/bfrinn.htm, is at 101 Ann Street. It was designed by owner/operators Bruce and Katie Ethridge to reflect the charming character of Beaufort in both architecture and ambiance. There are three floors with 44 well-appointed rooms, two of which are handicapped-accessible. Each has either a balcony or patio and they offer every combination of bed size and smoking or non-smoking options. Our recommendation is a king-sized room, with a balcony overlooking the Beaufort Channel and furnished with rocking chairs. These, with their western exposure, allow a ringside seat for watching stunningly romantic sunsets by night and cavorting dolphins and low-flying pelicans by day. Room rates vary between $59 and $139, according to the season, and include a complimentary breakfast – of which the highlight is Katie's breakfast pie. A Queen Anne-style décor graces the parlor, stocked with floor-to-ceiling bookshelves and offering the warmth of a roaring fire in winter. On hand, also, is a fully equipped exercise room and an outdoor hot tub spa.

Cape Carteret

The **Harborlight Guest House Bed & Breakfast**, ☎ 252-393-6868, 800-62-4-VIEW, fax 393-6868, www.bbonline.com/nc/harborlight/, 332 Live Oak Drive, Cape Carteret, is prettily

situated upon a peninsula offering 530 feet of shoreline on beautiful Bogue Sound. Indeed, there are few establishments more ideally situated for lovers in search of a secluded hideaway. When traveling west on Highway 24, take a left on Bayshore Drive, by T.J.'s Pizza, 16 miles from the junction with Route 70 East. Follow Bayshore to Edgewater Court, where you make another left and then, finally, a right on Live Oak Drive. Soon you will come to the Harborlight. Perseverance, however, pays off in the end, and you will not be disappointed with what you find at the end of the trail.

It was in 1992 that innkeepers Bobby and Anita Gill, their hearts set on opening a first-class bed and breakfast, set out in search of a property. When Anita saw an abandoned building, the former home of the Harborlight Restaurant, it was love at first sight. She remembers thinking, "this is the one," and recalls that within two hours they had planned the entire renovation. A remarkably short 105 days later, what had begun as a dream became a reality. First gutted, then totally renovated, decorated in whites and pastels with a nautical flair and outfitted with furniture and accessories collected from flea markets and attic sales, the Harborlight opened its doors to grateful guests and rave reviews. Today the success story continues, in large part due to the innkeepers' dedication to privacy, quality and service.

Privacy is ensured on two fronts. First, because the owners do not indulge in highway advertising, there are not many curious drive-by tourists. Second, Harborlight was architecturally designed to allow private outside entrance to all suites. The innkeepers' commitment to quality is immediately evident. From the beautifully landscaped grounds to the tastefully appointed suites, every consideration is given to the pleasure and comfort of their guests. Each room/suite has in-room climate control, ceiling fan, coffeemaker, and cable TV. Luxury Suites have gas fireplaces, two-person whirlpool tubs and king-sized beds.

Don't look for telephones, though. On a romantic weekend who wants one? But, never fear – if you must contact the outside world, the Gills will gladly let you borrow the portable.

It may be, though, that what keeps guests coming back is the commitment to service. The Gills not only provide a friendly atmosphere and serve a top-notch gourmet breakfast – either overlooking the water garden or in-suite – they take pride in going the extra mile. Among the little extra things, expect a snack of cheese and fruits and a complimentary bottle of wine, a morning newspaper hanging on your door in the morning, assistance planning excursions to Hammock Beach State Park or the Cape Island Lighthouse, and helpful suggestions on dinner reservations. For guests staying two or more nights, robes and slippers are provided. There is even an activity board posted in the dining area to keep guests apprised of activities and field trips that are scheduled for any given day.

From among the large and lovely rooms and suites, you may choose one of the following. Room #5 (285 square feet) and Room #6 (216 square feet) are both on the ground floor and are handicapped-accessible. They have queen-sized beds, views over the sound and rent for $100 and $75, respectively. Suite #1 (606 square feet) rents for $140 per night. It features a sunroom overlooking the sound, a spacious living room and a bedroom with a queen-sized bed; there is also a gas fireplace, a reading area, and two TVs – one with a VCR. With advance notice, breakfast may be taken in the sunroom.

The favorite for early risers is the east-facing, 550-square-foot Suite #2, which has glorious sunrise views. It has a queen-sized bed, a TV/VCR, a large two-person whirlpool tub in the bedroom, and it rents for $155 per night. The two-room Luxury Suite #3 has 760 square feet and costs $175 per night. The living room has a gas fireplace, TV, sitting area, dining area for an in-suite breakfast and a two-person whirlpool tub. In the bedroom are a king-sized bed and TV/VCR. The suite is surrounded on three sides by water and the views are fabulous.

Overlooking the back channel of Bogue Sound is the 390-square-foot Suite #4, a favorite for its views of the romantic sunsets. With queen-sized bed, TV/VCR, dining area for breakfast in-suite, and a bathroom that features a corner whirlpool tub for two, this rents for $155 per night. On the third floor, in the 395-square-foot Suite #8, views of Bogue Sound can be enjoyed from a queen-sized bed; a marble fireplace lends warmth to the ambiance. The bathroom also has water views, a claw-foot tub and a separate shower. The tariff is $125 per night. Also on the third floor, with king-sized bed and stunning sunset views over the Bogue Sound from both the bedroom and the private deck is Suite #9. Its reading room is furnished with oversized wicker chairs and has a large corner fireplace. A romantic European bubble bath tub, TV/VCR and stereo complete the package for $175 per night.

We saved the best for last – Suite #7. Often called the "Penthouse Suite," this third-floor, 840-square-foot luxury waterfront suite is the most romantic of all. The living room has a gas fireplace and TV/VCR. A sunny breakfast room overlooks the large private deck with beautiful views over Bogue Sound and the Intracoastal Waterway. The bedroom has a king-sized bed and TV/VCR. The bath has a uniquely elevated two-person whirlpool tub with stunning views over the waterway and a two-person shower. And, it is eminently affordable at $200 a night.

A number of packages are available at attractive rates. There is a two-night minimum on weekends (three on holidays). Smoking is not permitted, nor are pets. Only adult guests aged 16 or over are welcome.

We have rarely, if ever, come across a B&B or inn that offers such a romantic combination of location, luxury and affordability as you will find at the Harborlight Guest House Bed & Breakfast.

Tables for Two

Beaufort

The **Beaufort Grocery Co.**, ☎ 252-728-3899, 117 Queen Street, tucked away on a side street just away from the waterfront, is an ideal place for an informal lunch or, in the evenings, a sophisticated dinner. At lunch the fare consists of creative homemade soups, salads, deli-type sandwiches, fresh baked bread and a variety of cheesecakes and other unique desserts. For dinner expect appetizers like Saganaki Kasseri, cheese flamed in brandy with house bread ($5.89); or Seafood Burros, soft tortillas of shrimp, scallops, spinach and pico de gallo salsa with salsa verde and sour cream ($7.99). Main courses, all of which are prepared to order and come with a produce salad, might be Sea Level Veal and Shrimp, veal medallions and scampi in Marsala wine with varietal mushrooms over spinach and mashed potatoes ($17.34); or Supremes Saltimbocca, sautéed chicken breasts wrapped in prosciutto and sage with brandy, cream and crimini mushrooms over roasted red peppers and potato cake ($16.21). If your appetites are a little less than hearty, sharing an entrée will cost you only $6 extra.

The **Front Street Grill**, ☎ 252-728-3118, 419-A Front Street, just across from the waterfront, is a bright and airy restaurant offering an interesting selection of soups and salads, sandwiches, small plates and big plates. Our favorites are crispy fried calamari, with mixed field greens, sesame vinaigrette and ginger aïoli ($6.95); fried Thai pork dumplings, with ginger mustard and wasabi drizzle ($7.75); and Thai barbecued shrimp with coconut curry sauce ($17.50). Dinner is served Tuesday through Sunday beginning at 5 pm.

Morehead City

The **Harbor House Restaurant**, ☎ 252-247-7009, 714 Shepard Street, offers fine dining in a relaxed waterfront atmosphere. Lunch consists of a choice of sandwiches, with a small range of appetizers and salads. Dinner presents a very

eclectic menu, with numerous intriguing appetizers and entrées. Among our favorite appetizers are pheasant sausage with a hint of cognac, served with a smoked tomato and truffle cream and a garnish of sautéed chanterelle mushrooms ($9.95); or lobster in squid ink pasta, fresh squid ink ravioli filled with lobster and served with a basil Mornay sauce and a garnish of red and black caviar ($10.95). Entrées include Seared Duck Grand Marnier, tender boneless breast of duck pan-seared with slivered almonds and mandarin orange slices with sauce Grand Marnier ($17.95); and the Harbor House Mixed Grill, tuna or salmon, filet, lamb, duck and black mussels grilled to perfection and served with a wonderful array of the chef's sauces ($23.95). Lunch is served Monday through Thursday from 11 am to 2 pm, and Friday and Saturday from 11 am to 3 pm. Dinner hours are Wednesday and Thursday from 5 to 9 pm (5 to 10 pm on Friday and Saturday). Sunday brunch is served from 11 am to 3 pm.

The **Channel Marker Restaurant**, ☎ 252-247-2344, is located on the causeway between Morehead City and Atlantic Beach. It has marvelous views overlooking Bogue Sound. In addition to spacious dining rooms with picture windows and an attractive bar, this establishment boasts the largest outdoor dining space in the area. The cuisine is hearty and plentiful, with seafood, of course, being predominant. Look for a generous number of appetizers ($3.50 to $6.95); "Captain's Orders," which include an array of seafood platters ($14.95 to $19.95) and house specialties such as Steamed Shrimp and Snow Crab Legs as well as "Land and Sea Combinations" ($15.95 to $28.95). "Landlubber's Fare" is, as the name implies, meat-oriented, with steaks priced according to size and with each extra ounce over the standard portion costing $1.50 more. The Channel Marker is open seven nights a week, beginning at 5 pm.

Atlantic Beach

The **Paradise Restaurant**, ☎ 252-240-1155 or fax 240-1452, 2717 West Fort Macon Road, is a casual, full-service restaurant in the Sheraton Atlantic Beach Oceanfront Hotel. Al-

though the dinner menu features fresh local seafood and prime cuts of USDA meat, we were most attracted by the seafood buffet. Served from 5 to 9 pm each Friday and Saturday night, this features fresh steamed crab legs, peel and eat shrimp, seafood entrées, fried flounder, popcorn shrimp, house smoked Atlantic salmon, clam strips, hush puppies, chicken, beef and pork entrées, vegetables, an array of cold salads and clam chowder. If that isn't enough to satisfy your hunger, make a stop at the Chef's Sauté Station for fresh shrimp, scallops and pasta. At $18.95 per person, this veritable feast won't break the bank. The Champagne Sunday Brunch runs $13.95 per person, offering a tantalizing array of foods between 11:30 am and 2 pm.

Shops, Spas, etc.

Let's begin with flowers, shall we? We've yet to meet the lady who isn't charmed and flattered by a bouquet – especially a surprise bouquet. And, guys, isn't that how you want her to feel at the onset of your romantic weekend? If so, then give Lynette Dudley of **Consider the Lilies, Inc., Florist, Gifts & Interiors,** a call at ☎ 252-726-8036, 800-601-8036 or fax 726-4422. She can arrange to have a dozen roses, a spring bouquet, or whatever other floral tribute suits your fancy waiting in your room upon arrival. For an extra special treat, include a gift certificate with the card. Then, the two of you can visit her store at 4130 Arendell Street together and choose a souvenir from the great gifts she has on hand. While you are there, have Lynette whip you up a gourmet basket. Filled with fresh fruit, gourmet chocolates, cheese, sausages, crackers and other snacks, this makes for a great late-night feast back at the hotel.

We like to include a quality lingerie shop with our loving touches. Kathy must admit that it was Norman who introduced her to the world of fine lingerie. European women seem to be much more indulgent of their personal pleasure in this area. Americans are catching on, though it is interesting to note that, while some of the more cosmopolitan cities still have no clue, an unassuming town may have already jumped on the bandwagon. Such is the case with the Crystal Coast. So guys,

treat your gal to a shopping spree at **The Intimate – Lingerie, Bath and Body**, ☎ 252-808-2221. Located in the upscale Pelletier Harbor Shops at 4426 Arendell Street, it is just down the street from Consider the Lilies.

Proprietor Mary W. Johnson, in her delicate feminine fashion, has selected a fine and interesting range of lingerie. Look for such well-known names as Claire Pettibone, Davero – the New York designer, Karen Neuberger, LaSoie sculptured silk, the Ralph Lauren collection, Oprah Winfrey pajamas and beautiful Valéna nightgowns.

On a more whimsical note, The Intimate carries such items as the Lingerie Bouquet – a floral box of long stemmed roses, where each bud blossoms into an exotic piece of lingerie – and there are enough buds to make a very complete, if skimpy, outfit.

Ladies may treat their partners as well, maybe with a silk lounging robe or a Panty Rose – silk boxers in a rose box. Simply said, you both are sure to find something here to make you feel attractive and pampered.

Now that you've got the roses and the lingerie, what about the champagne and goodies? To tie everything up in a tidy bundle, we would suggest a gift basket from **The Crystal Palate**, ☎ 252-247-4949, fax 240-1113, e-mail tcp@nternet.net, 4426 Arendell Street, in the Pelletier Harbor Shops. Opened in 1989, this shop has the distinction of being the oldest gourmet shop in Carteret County. Owner Marty Hedgepeth has accumulated a wide selection of fine champagnes and wines, and a wide variety of specialty items – including imported cheeses, delicious chocolates, coffees, teas and upscale gifts from around the world. She knows, too, that fine champagne deserves to be sipped from fine glassware and carries a nice selection of signed champagne stems, which make great souvenirs. If you are into tea, then you'll be straining to pay extra attention to the teapot collection.

Wilmington & Wrightsville Beach

When we first visited Wilmington over a quarter of a century ago, it, like many cities of its genre, was struggling to establish for itself a new identity. Leaders had already come to the realization that neither its plentiful and interesting history nor the attraction of the battleship *North Carolina* had proved sufficient to entice visitors to the town. Tourism needed a shot in the arm.

Happily, we can report that Wilmington is now an absolutely delightful city with a totally revitalized downtown area. And that did not come about by chance. Following the formation of the Downtown Area Revitalization Effort Inc. (DARE) in 1977, a large-scale redevelopment of the Central Business District ensued, with investments since that time exceeding $150 million.

History

But, to begin closer to the beginning, Wilmington's history stretches back through several centuries to 1524, when explorer Giovanni da Verazano landed in the area while sailing in the name of the King of France. Strangely, the French showed very little interest, and it was not until two centuries later, in 1725, that the first permanent settlement, at Brunswick just across the Cape Fear River, was established. Earlier, in the mid-17th century, settlers from the Massachusetts Bay Colony had attempted to settle the area, but a combination of circumstances forced them south, where they founded the city of Charleston. Finally, in 1732, a new settlement was founded on this, the higher east bank of the river. It was known by several names – New Carthage, New Liverpool and Newton – before Governor Gabriel Johnston named it in honor of his friend Spencer Compton, Earl of Wilmington, in 1739.

Wilmington's strategic position, at the junction of the two branches of the Cape Fear River and high upon a bluff, protected from the Atlantic Ocean, created a safe port. In turn, this led to very favorable trading conditions, which were exploited by both settlers and ocean going vessels. In short order, Wilmington became a thriving seaport, and soon had captured the position of North Carolina's largest city.

Strangely though, it was the area's abundance of pine trees, the world's largest collection at the time, which led to the city's affluence. By-products of the pine trees were the tar, pitch and turpentine so necessary to keep wooden ships afloat. The demands of the British Navy, the world's largest, for these by-products was enormous and, as a result, the Wilmington region flourished. By 1768, more naval stores passed consistently through Cape Fear than any other port in the British Empire.

This, of course, was also the era of the Revolutionary War and among the prominent patriots who called the area home was William Hooper, a signatory to the Declaration of Independence. In January of 1781 Wilmington was taken by the British, an occupation that lasted until October of the same year. During that period, Cornwallis used the residence of John Burgwin, located on the most prominent corner of downtown Wilmington, as his headquarters.

Growth rallied slowly after the war, and it was not until the 1840 opening of the Wilmington and Wheldon Railroad, at that time the longest in the world, that the economy once again flourished. It was soon recognized, also, as the site of the largest cotton exchange in the world. In the succeeding decades many of the city's most enduring and impressive structures were completed. Among these were the Town Hall, Thalian Hall, the Bellamy Mansion, and the Zebulon Latimer House – all of which we will discuss in more detail in the *Things to Do* section of this chapter.

During the Civil War massive defenses were erected to protect the city and, as a result, Wilmington remained open longer than any other Atlantic port city of the Confederacy. Blockade-runners, with their multi-national crews and abundance of monetary resources, brought with them an era of international

influence,along with one unwelcome immigrant – Yellow Fever, which in 1862 took the lives of 300 citizens. It was near the end of the conflict, on January 15th, 1865 and after the most extensive naval bombardment of the century, that Fort Fisher fell and Wilmington was overrun.

Recovery was not long delayed after the war. Cotton again became a major economic factor and a building boom ensued. Rice, though, suffered a decline, as did the business in naval stores. The latter was occasioned by the decreasing pine forests and the advent of metal-clad vessels. The expansion continued through the early part of the new century, as, during World War II, the need for ships and the accompanying maritime skills of the Wilmington citizenry worked in concert and shipbuilding again figured prominently in the economy. In fact, the Cape Fear area's population increased rapidly to nearly 100,000 as the region played host to a major military base and construction area.

Post-war years, however, saw the city's sharp decline and, in the 1950s two unfortunate events seemed to spell doom for the floundering metropolis. First, in 1954, Hurricane Hazel devastated the downtown area. In the following year, the area's 10th largest employer, the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad, removed its corporate headquarters from the city.

The future, though, would be brighter than it had appeared. The expanding technologies of the 1960s brought new industries to the city with economic recovery in their wake. Concurrently, there came a new understanding of and appreciation for Wilmington's heritage. In 1974 over 200 city blocks, stretching from the Cape Fear River to Ninth Street, were listed in the National Register of Historic Places, making it the largest neighborhood so recognized. More recently, since 1983, Wilmington has attracted the attention of filmmakers, whose industry now contributes over $100 million annually to city revenues. Presently, the population of Wilmington is slightly over 60,000, a considerable proportion of whom are students at the University of North Carolina, Wilmington.

It is believed that Wrightsville Beach and the Masonboro Islands were the first of this area's locations to be explored by the

European adventurers. Whether true or not, this particular area was not readily accessible until the middle of the 19th century, at which time the first road to the beach was completed. The Tidewater Power Company subsequently took an interest and began investing in the beach, which is named for the prominent landowners of their day, the Wright family. It was incorporated as a resort community in 1899, and three years later the power-company began operation of a trolley service, which replaced an earlier railroad. This ran a 12-mile, 35-minute route from downtown and, until 1935, provided the sole land link with Wrightsville Beach. In early 1903, Tidewater Power Company bought an oceanfront lot next to the end of the trolley line. Following up on a bright idea, they commissioned the building of The Lumina pavilion; bedecked with thousands of lights, it was visible far out to sea. Made entirely of heart pine, this three-story structure became an entertainment mecca. It served as a beach house by day and, by night, its huge dance floor attracted some of the renowned big bands of the day. The Lumina remained a major landmark until its demolition in 1975.

Wilmington Today

This narrow island, just over 4½ miles long and with an area of not quite one square mile, has been battered untold times by hurricanes – the more serious of which blew through in 1954 and 1996. Fires also have caused much damage. Each calamity, however, has been followed by timely repair. Coastal erosion, though, especially at the north end of the island (near the Shell Island Resort Hotel and many condominiums), is a source of major concern. The problem is compounded by North Carolina's strict laws regarding seawalls, which are perceived to have more negative than positive effects on beaches.

Wrightsville Beach is attractive because it has managed to avoid the overt commercialization of such places as Myrtle Beach, Virginia Beach and Ocean City. This really is a family place. It has over 3,000 permanent residents, and draws huge numbers of visitors in the season. Most of the buildings are sin-

gle-family cottages, interspersed with only a handful of hotels and high rises. In keeping with the ecological sensitivities here, a nature reserve has been created in the middle of Harbor Island, rather than a commercial development.

As an interesting aside, the exotic venus fly trap, a perennial plant called by Charles Darwin "the most wonderful plant in the world," is found only within a 100-mile radius of Wilmington. Not only does this amazing plant have a primitive nervous system similar to that of animals, it is both insectivorous and carnivorous. Don't try taking one home with you, though. That will get you arrested.

Notwithstanding the occasional hurricane, the weather in this area is pleasant indeed. The Gulf Stream, some 45 miles offshore, keeps the weather on this part of the Eastern Coast unusually mild. Even in the height of summer, the temperature generally reaches only the upper 80s, with the mean average temperature remaining in the low 60s. On a culinary note, seafood lovers will be in their element. Local restaurants pride themselves on serving some of the freshest seafood on the Atlantic Coast.

We believe you will agree that Wilmington, with its history and wonderful inns and B&Bs, in combination with the sun, sea and sand of unspoiled Wrightsville Beach, provides an alluring backdrop for a romantic weekend. What else could you both want? And where else could you find it?

Things to Do

We suggest you begin with a little history lesson on Wilmington. You don't have to go very far, and it is entertaining as well. Stroll to the junction of Market and Water Streets by the Cape Fear River, and look for the flagpole announcing "**Wilmington Adventure Tours** BEGINS HERE," ☎ 910-763-1785. Of course, you will have to ignore the hulking battle-

ship *North Carolina*, whose presence on the opposite riverbank dominates the scene. She is inaccessible from this point and we will introduce her later. In the meantime, you won't have any trouble identifying the Adventure Tour guides; their canes and hats easily set them apart. Between April and October, at 10 am and 2 pm and without prior appointment, they will introduce you to Wilmington by way of a guided walking tour, for a fee of just $10 each.

The **Cape Fear Coast Convention Bureau** operates a Visitors Booth near here, but is open only seasonally – from April to October between 9 am and 4 pm. At other times, visit the main office at 24 North Third Street, ☎ 910-341-4030, 800-222-4757, fax 341-4029, e-mail info@cape-fear.nc.us or www.cape-fear.nc.us. Its visitor-friendly hours are Monday to Friday, 8:30 am to 5 pm, Saturday, 9 am to 4 pm; and Sunday, 1 to 4 pm.

Before leaving the Town Hall, take a look at one of Wilmington's most enduring monuments, the adjacent **Thalian Hall**, ☎ 910-343-3664 or 800-523-2820. Built in 1858, this housed the town government, a library and a theater or, as it was called then, an "Opera House." The latter seated 1,000 people, which was more than 10% of Wilmington's population at that time. At the end of the 18th century, the city began to welcome productions by professional touring companies as a major stop on the theatrical circuit that also included New Orleans, Charleston and Richmond. The theater also hosted shows by a local gentlemen's acting society, the Thalian Society, hence its name. After a small fire in 1973, it was restored to its Victorian grandeur. The building is open for tours, Monday to Friday at 11 am and 3 pm and on Saturday at 2 pm. As it still stages shows of international, national and local repute, it is considered to be the oldest continuously operating community theater in the United States.

If the guided tour has whet your appetites for more history, then there is plenty more to satisfy. As discussed above, Wilmington has an uncommonly large district listed on the National Historic Register. This boasts an array of meticulously restored antebellum, Italianate, Victorian and Georgian homes and, while not all are large and grand, few are without

interest. Even for those not overly inclined towards history, the plaques mounted on these homes make for interesting reading. Unfortunately, most of these are not open to visitors, but the following three are well worth a look.

The **Bellamy Mansion**, ☎ 910-251-3700, at 5th Avenue and Market Street, is a truly magnificent example of antebellum architecture, built in 1859, just before the onslaught of the Civil War, by a prominent planter, Dr. John D. Bellamy. During those hostilities the home was taken over by the Union army, but the family managed to reclaim it after the war and actually lived there until 1946. Presently, its 22 rooms on four floors house a museum with exhibits that document the home's physical and personal history. Visit Wednesday to Saturday from 10 am to 5 pm and Sunday 1 to 5 pm.

Of an altogether different style is the **Burgwin-Wright House**, ☎ 910-762-0570, built in 1770 by merchant, planter and Colonial official John Burgwin. The Wright family purchased it for 3,500 Spanish milled dollars in 1799 and it remained in their possession until 1869. Interestingly, the foundation of ballast stone upon which this Colonial home stands today at one time belonged to a jail, and its antique furnishings, outside kitchen and lovely gardens make for a fascinating tour. Found at 3rd and Market Streets, this has the distinction of being the oldest museum house in the lower Cape Fear region. It is open from February to December, with guided tours on Tuesday through Saturday from 10 am to 4 pm.

The Victorian/Italianate style **Latimer House**, ☎ 910-762-0492, fax 763-5869, www.wilmington.net.org/latimer, dates from around 1852, and was built by a prosperous businessman, Zebulon Latimer, upon his marriage to a local lady. In 1963, it passed out of that family's hands, and became the headquarters of the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society. The house is at 126 South 3rd Street, and open Monday to Friday, 10 am to 10:30, and Saturday and Sunday from midday to 5. Walking tours are offered on Wednesday and Saturday at 10 am. The museum exhibits chronicle the history of the house.

If you are lucky enough to be visiting during the first weekend of December, be sure to take the Historical Society's very romantic Historical Candlelight Tour, featuring this area's finest homes.

Moving along, the handicapped-accessible **Cape Fear Museum**, ☎ 910-341-4350 or fax 341-4037, at 814 Market Street, bears investigation. It was established in1898 as a Confederate Museum; these days, its exhibits document the social and natural history of the area. Sports lovers in particular will be fascinated by the hands-on adventures in the Michael Jordan Discovery Gallery. Photographs and memorabilia highlight the majestic career of this hometown hero and international legend. It is open in the summer Monday through Saturday from 9 am to 5 pm and Sunday 2 to 5 pm, but closed on Monday the rest of the year.

Although Michael is, arguably, the most famous of the group, he is not alone in calling the Cape Fear area home. Other notable sportsmen and women who grew up here are Meadowlark Lemon, of Harlem Globetrotters fame; NFL quarterbacks Sonny Jurgensen and Roman Gabriel; boxing champion Sugar Ray Leonard; and female tennis star Althea Gibson. Nonsporting notables include journalists Charles Kuralt and David Brinkley; Charlie Daniels; Sammy Davis, Jr.; and painter Minnie Evans.

The **St. John's Museum of Art**, ☎ 910-763-0281, at 114 Orange Street, is the primary visual arts center in southeastern North Carolina. Located in three distinctive restored buildings that date from the beginning of the 19th century, its permanent art collection includes works by three centuries of North Carolina masters. These are complemented by works in paper, sculpture and Jugtown pottery and by one of the world's largest collections of romantic color prints by 19th-century American artist Mary Cassatt. Explore its treasures Tuesday through Saturday from 10 am to 5 pm; and Sunday, noon to 4 pm.

Tours

Tired of walking and shopping? Let us suggest a relaxing way to get a different perspective on Wilmington and Wrightsville Beach. If you spent any time at the waterfront, perhaps while awaiting the guided tour, you probably noticed the *Henrietta II*, North Carolina's only true sternwheel riverboat. Although not an original – it was built in the late 1980s – it will surely evoke visions of a romantic 19th-century riverboat fantasy. The operators, **Cape Fear Riverboats, Inc.**, ☎ 910-343-1611 or 800-676-0162, offer a choice of cruises. A 1½-hour Narrated Sightseeing Cruise departs at least once daily between April and October at a cost of $10 per person. Perhaps an Entertainment Dinner Cruise is more to your taste. These run on Friday and Saturday evenings between April and December, for 2½ hours, starting at 7 pm. On Fridays, a Southern Buffet is served and the cost is $32 per person. On Saturdays, expect a full spare rib meal and a price of $35 per person. Most romantic to our minds is the Moonlight Cruise, departing in June, July, August and September at 10:30 pm for a 1½-hour cruise beneath the stars, costing $10 per person. In addition, a number of Special Events Cruises are scheduled throughout the year. With all cruises, guests are asked to board a full half-hour before sailing time.

Another maritime option is a trip with **Wrightsville Beach Scenic Cruises**, ☎ 910-350-2628. This company operates out of the Blockade-Runner Resort at Wrightsville Beach and offers a selection of very interesting sailings. Most popular is the one-hour Narrated Harbor Cruise for $10 per person, but romantics would do well to consider, at $15 per person, a 1½-hour Narrated Sunset Cruise. Immediately to the south of Wrightsville Beach is a beautiful, fascinating and uninhabited (at least by humans) Barrier Island.

Best described as pristine, **Masonboro Island** is a wonderland of nature. It is among the most successful nesting grounds for loggerhead turtles, protected by the Endangered Species Act. Turtles visit the area between mid-May and late August. The female of this species can weigh from 200 to 500 lbs, and lays an average of 120 eggs in the dunes closest to the sea. Also

look for otters, raccoons, a variety of birds and several species of aquatic life. You may enjoy shelling, crabbing and clamming, or simply sunbathing and relaxing. Whatever your plans, though, take everything you will need with you, including food and drink and, very importantly, sunscreen and bug spray. You will surely want to play your part in preserving this lovely and clean natural environment, so remember, you are responsible for packing out everything you pack in. Wrightsville Beach Scenic Cruises has three ways to acquaint you with Masonboro Island, a mere 20-minute sail away. A shuttle service departs at 10 am and returns at 1 pm for $10 per person; the Masonboro Island Nature Excursion includes three hours of fun and information with a marine biologist for $20 per person and, if you are an adventure lover, arrangements can be made for the two of you to camp out overnight.

For a real overview, more specifically a bird's eye view, of Wilmington and Wrightsville Beach, give Ken Vojta of **ISO AERO of Wilmington, Inc.**, ☎ 910-763-88998 or fax 763-8820, a call. You can choose your flight of fancy from two options, each departing from New Hanover International Airport, just a short distance from downtown. A "Figure 8" Formation around the city and coastal beaches will cost $42 per couple; double that fee allows for a One-Hour Flight overlooking the coastal beaches, Masonboro Island, Fort Fisher, Bald Head Island and the *USS Battleship North Carolina*.

Speaking of which, back on terra firma, cross the Cape Fear River to the monument that, figuratively if not literally, dominates Wilmington. The ***USS Battleship North Carolina***, ☎ 910-350-1817, www.city-info.com/ncbb55.html, won 15 World War II battle stars in Pacific Ocean combat zones between 1941 and 1945. It is truly the star attraction of this city. Most impressive at night as the sun slowly slips below the horizon, the silhouette of this massive vessel – 728 feet in length and displacing over 44,000 tons – is awesome indeed. She is maintained in much the same condition as during the war. Putting this in amazing perspective, if two *Battleship North Carolinas* stood end to end they would be as tall as the Empire State Building! She was manned by a crew of 2,339, spread

throughout her nine decks, and on a self-guided tour you can see how they lived, worked and played. To get a glimpse of its power, you can climb inside a 16-inch gun turret and realize that it could fire a 2,700 lb shell (the weight of a medium-sized car) as far as 20 miles. Astounding! At its stern sits one of the few Kingfisher floatplanes still in existence; when these planes were pressed into service they were actually catapulted from the ship's deck. The *USS Battleship North Carolina* now serves as a fitting World War II memorial to the 10,000 North Carolinians who did not return from battle. It is open daily in the summer months from 8 am to 8 pm and at other times from 8 am to 5 pm. Last tickets are sold an hour before those closing times, but bear in mind that a tour takes about two hours.

Sweet Dreams

Wilmington

The **Graystone Inn**, ☎ 910-763-2000, 888-763-4773, fax 763-5555 or e-mail paaulb@graystoneinn.com, at 100 South Third Street, is an incredibly imposing mansion, even from the exterior. An historic landmark and one of the most beautiful structures in Wilmington, the "Bridgers' Mansion," as it was once known, was built in 1905-1906 by Elizabeth Haywood Bridgers. She was the widow of local merchant, Preston L. Bridgers, son of the prominent Robert Rufus Bridgers, a past president of the Atlantic Coast Line Railway, founder of the Wilmington/Wheldon Railroad and twice a representative to the Confederate Congress. When we first happened upon the inn in the fall of 1997, we were impressed. Indeed, it has captured the attention of many a movie and television producer and has played host to numerous notable personalities. At that time, though, the property was in the process of being sold and we were unsure as to its future. However, the new owners, Paul and Yolanda Bolda, returning to the United States after a four-year residency just outside of London, knew exactly how they would proceed. With a very stylish and elegant remodeling

they have enhanced what was already a gracious home, creating an inn the equal of the best we have seen.

Although you won't be denied the convenience of modern facilities – each room has a telephone with voice mail, PC dataports, and cable TV – don't expect to find a modern ambiance. The inn is, in fact, furnished throughout with handsome period furniture. The window treatments are exquisite and only the finest cotton linens, towels and robes are used in the guest rooms. Space, too, is a plus here. The 1,300-square-foot Bellevue Suite, with river views, makes for an absolutely perfect romantic getaway. Located on the secluded third floor, it has 18-foot ceilings, scenic French wallpaper, a four-poster king-sized bed and, in case you are overawed with such luxury, a Victorian fainting couch in the sitting room. The walk-in shower and claw-foot bath, which each will accommodate two, offer even more romantic opportunities! The rate is $289 per night. A bit smaller at 850 square feet is the Latimer/St. Thomas Suite, finished out in a dramatic color scheme of yellows, greens and burgundies. It has a king-sized bed, two fireplaces – one in the bedroom, the other in the sitting room – and a private bathroom with Victorian cage shower. The rate is $239 per night. The 700-square-foot Burgwin-Wright junior suite, with a queen-sized bed, can be yours for $199 a night. Four additional guest rooms, still roomy at approximately 500 square feet each, are equally romantic. The Bridgers Bedroom has a queen-sized canopy bed; the St. James Bedroom has a leather sleigh bed; the *USS North Carolina* Bedroom has a full-sized Victorian iron canopy bed; and the de Rosset Bedroom has a Louis XIII queen-sized bed. The latter rents for $159 per night, the other three for $179 per night, with all rates including a full breakfast.

We were curious about the origin of the room names; there didn't seem to be a consistent theme, but there actually is. Each name, inherited by Paul and Yolanda when they purchased the inn, reflects the view from that room's windows. At least one is obvious, but we will leave the explanations to your prospective hosts.

If you would like a foretaste of what you can expect, the thoroughness with which the Boldas have gone about restoring the Graystone Inn can be seen in great detail on their website at www.graystoneinn.com. Finally, when making your plans, you will want to take into account that, on holiday weekends, the Boldas require a two-night minimum stay.

The **Front Street Inn**, ☎ 910-762-6442, fax 762-8991, www.frontstreetinn.wilmington.net/front.html, is housed in a converted Salvation Army building of classical Italianate architecture with large arched windows, balconies, and glorious Cape Fear River views. Jay and Stefany Rhodes, your hosts, have created an ambiance of peace and privacy in the middle of Wilmington's Historic District.

The interior is colorfully and interestingly decorated throughout with American art, assiduously gathered at galleries, fairs, auctions and attic sales. Among the public areas is the enticing Sol y Sombra, which doubles as a bar and breakfast room, with the former well-stocked with beer, champagne, and wine, as well as healthful beverages. Look for an exercise room, bicycles and a salon where, by appointment, a visiting masseuse will relax you. The 10 spacious and airy suites are uniquely and beautifully decorated. These feature a mix of king-sized and queen-sized beds. Each has a full private bath – some with a Jacuzzi, individual climate control, TV with VCR, phones, dataports, cotton terry robes and wet bars with coffeemakers. One option, the deluxe Hemingway Suite, has a private balcony and a fireplace in addition to all the other amenities. First-floor suites cost between $95 and $155 a night and second-floor suites range from $110 to $155.

The **Rosehill Inn**, ☎ 910-815-0250, 800-815-0250, fax 815-0350, www.rosehill.com, 114 South Third Street, occupies a beautiful house built in 1848 by distinguished businessman and banker Henry Russell Savage. Subsequently, it was the home of Henry Bacon Jr., architect of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC. These days, this 7,000-square-foot home has been lovingly restored to serve as an elegant yet comfortable bed & breakfast. The six guest rooms, three with king-sized beds and three with queen-sized beds, are uniquely designed and decorated to incorporate an eclectic mix of antiques accented with fine fabrics. The in-season rates recently were $169 for king-sized and $139 for queen-sized. Off-season rates, in the winter, reflect a $30 discount. Laurel Jones and Dennis Fietsch, the innkeepers, will be pleased to offer a healthy breakfast of homemade delights. Smokers will want to be aware that it is permitted on the verandas only.

The **Worth House**, a Victorian bed and breakfast inn, ☎ 910-762-8562, 800-340-8559, fax 763-2173, e-mail worthhse@wilmington.net, www.bbonline.com/nc/wworth, 412 South Third Street, makes its home in a gracious Queen Anne-style building that dates from 1893. The parlor, library and formal dining room are full to overflowing with antiques and period paintings. And the seven guest rooms, most named after a type of flora, each have a distinct personality. Five are furnished with king-sized beds, two have queen-sized beds and all have private bath, sitting area, ceiling fans and telephone; some have a fireplace and/or a private porch. Rates vary from $80 to $120 per night and include a full breakfast served in the formal dining room, in your room or on the second-story porch. Hosts Francie and John Miller request that guests restrict smoking to one of the shady porches or the extensive gardens. Light refreshments, such as coffee, tea, soft drinks and snacks, are on hand around the clock.

The **Wilmington Hilton**, ☎ 910-763-5900 or fax 763-0038, 301 Water Street, currently undergoing a huge expansion, has a fantastic location on the banks of the Cape Fear River across from The Cotton Exchange shopping center. You can take your choice of 178 beautifully renovated guest rooms, including six

Executive Suites and three Presidential Suites. Better to request rooms on the Concierge Level, where you will enjoy additional benefits such as complimentary beverages each evening, in-room Continental breakfast, and the use of soft terry robes. Look, also, for fine on-site dining at Compton's on the Riverwalk, a relaxing outdoor pool and a heated hydrotherapy whirlpool.

Wrightsville Beach

The **Blockade Runner – Beach Resort & Conference Center**, ☎ 910-256-2251, 800-541-1161, fax 256-5502, www.blockade-runner.com, 275 Waynick Boulevard, is the only oceanfront hotel on Wrightsville Beach. This distinguished position allows 90 guest rooms with Atlantic Ocean views – 30 with private balconies, while the other 60 guest rooms face Wrightsville Sound and the Intracoastal Waterway. The oceanfront terrace heated pool is open year-round, and an adjacent indoor health club features a large Jacuzzi that accommodates 12, a sauna and the latest in Hydrafitness exercise equipment. The on-site Ocean Terrace restaurant, newly renovated after suffering at the hands of Hurricane Fran, is a local landmark renowned for its culinary delights. Every Friday is Lobster Night, with large and tender crustaceans, and Saturday brings the hotel's famous prime rib and seafood buffet. After dinner, relax with a cocktail in The Aquarium Lounge and enjoy a late night snack of Malpeque Oysters on the halfshell, direct from Prince Edward Island.

Sports lovers will feel very much at home at the Blockade-Runner. Try your luck windsurfing on-site or rent a kayak or Hobie Cat. Rentals and instruction, as well as bicycle rentals, are coordinated through the health club. Parasailing is also available, and several deep-sea fishing charter boats pick up guests at the hotel dock. Golfers aren't forgotten, either; they receive full privileges at 14 of the area's finest courses, as well as discounts on carts and green fees.

Tables for Two

The **Pilot House Restaurant**, ☎ 910-343-0200, located at Chandler's Wharf, is found in the historic Craig House, which dates from 1870. It overlooks the Cape Fear River and offers the opportunity of spectacular sunsets while dining either inside or alfresco on a covered uptown porch. It strives for innovative, high quality Southern regional cuisine in an ambiance best described as casually elegant to formal. Expect appetizers such as Crab-Stuffed Mushrooms, fresh mushroom caps with savory crabmeat stuffing, oven-baked with a light beurre blanc sauce ($6.95) or Vegetable Cheese Fritters, diced red onion, tomato, yellow corn and cheddar cheese mixed into cornmeal batter, fried golden brown and served with Creole Remoulade sauce ($5.95). Salads, with half-portions available, include the interesting Hot Sea Salad, shrimp and scallops sautéed with scallions, diced tomatoes, white wine, lemon pepper, garlic and olive oil, and served on a curried rice salad and a bed of baby greens with fresh garden garnishes ($9.95). There are several pasta dishes, with optional variations ($9.95 to $15.95). Among the more interesting of the meat and fowl entrées are Rack of Lamb coated with Dijon mustard, Reggiano cheese and breadcrumbs, served in a light lamb jus with chef's potato and fresh vegetables ($23.95) and Pan-Seared Duckling Breast, served with a blackberry Cognac sauce over maple mashed potatoes with sautéed fresh green beans ($17.95). Also taking our attention were Seafood Mixed Grill, fresh scallops and shrimp chargrilled with the night's fresh fish selection and served with a lemon beurre blanc ($18.95), and Crabmeat Stuffed Shrimp with Sherry, large shrimp topped with a seasoned crabmeat stuffing and baked in sherry butter sauce ($17.95), each served with rice pilaf and seasonal fresh vegetables. The Pilot House Restaurant is open for lunch daily from 11:30 am to 3 pm; for dinner Sunday through Thursday between the hours of 5 and 10 pm, and Friday and Saturday from 5 to 11 pm.

Elijah's, ☎ 910-343-1448, 2 Ann Street, is another of the colorful restaurants at Chandler's Wharf. Its nautical décor and location directly on the Cape Fear River are reminiscent of the building's former adventures as a maritime museum. It has an enclosed indoor dining room and an Oyster Bar with outdoor seating on the deck. No matter where you are seated, if your timing is right, you are guaranteed a remarkable scenario of the sun slipping beneath the horizon, with the *USS Battleship North Carolina*, moored on the opposite bank. Elijah's menu is a successful marriage of maritime fare and Lowcountry cuisine. Starters might include Oysters Elijah's, a half-dozen freshly shucked oysters broiled with crabmeat and sherry cream sauce ($7.25) or Shrimp & Cheese Garlic Bread, baby shrimp with mayonnaise, lemon and herbs, broiled on French bread with Monterey jack cheese (half $4.95/whole $7.95). Of the chicken, beef and pork dishes we would recommend Chargrilled Porkloin Chop, boneless 10-ounce center-cut loin chop marinated in apple cider vinegar, garlic, thyme and olive oil and served with chef's potatoes and fresh vegetables ($12.95). An example from the enticing pasta selections would be Blackened Mahi on Linguini Pasta, with shrimp sautéed in a Parmesan cheese sauce and topped with freshly grated Romano cheese ($17.95). Seafood, as expected, dominates the menu. The Dijon Shrimp with Garlic, large shrimps sautéed with Dijon mustard, chopped garlic, lemon, white wine, chicken stock and seasonings and served over seasoned rice with sautéed vegetables ($16.95), is worth your attention. The Oyster Bar serves selections from the raw bar, which also appear on the regular menu. Elijah's, a good choice either for lunch or dinner, is open daily from 11:30 am to 3 pm and from 5 to 10 pm – closing an hour later on weekends. Sunday brunch is served from 11:30 am to 3 pm. The Oyster Bar is open from 11:30 am until midnight.

Deluxe, ☎ 910-251-0333, in the center of downtown at 114 Market Street, is a relative newcomer to the Wilmington scene, but it has very quickly earned a reputation befitting its name

and become a favorite. The dining room décor is innovative. Unlike many trendy restaurants, there is ample space between tables, and the cuisine is certainly novel. Expect first courses like Cast Iron Seared Quail, glazed with blackstrap molasses, served over organic baby lettuces with blackberries and fresh goat cheese lightly dressed with a blackberry vanilla vinaigrette ($7.50); and Charred Sashimi of Ahi Tuna with a daikon radish salad and a scarlett orange vinaigrette garnished with tobbiko caviar ($8.50). Entrées might be Four Cheese Ravioli with skillet-seared wild mushrooms, white truffle oil and aged balsamic vinegar ($14.95); Rosemary Seared Duck Breast with a gorgonzola cheese and fresh pear risotto cake topped with toasted walnut greens and finished in a vintage port demi-glace ($17.50), and Spicy Thai Cashew Noodles, Asian rice noodles tossed in a toasted cashew sauce with steamed broccoli ($13.95). The wine list, well lists actually – one for wines by the glass and the other by the bottle – are equally eclectic. California vintages predominate, but there is more than a sprinkling of French and Italian, and a taste or two from Argentina, Australia and Spain. These change every two weeks to accommodate the ever-changing menu. Deluxe is open for lunch, Monday through Saturday, from 11:30 am to 2:30 pm, and for dinner, Sunday through Thursday from 5:30 to 10 pm and Friday and Saturday from 5:30 to 11 pm. Alternatively, try the Sunday brunch between 10:30 am and 2:30 pm.

Roy's Riverboat Landing, ☎ 910-763-7227, in a very central location on the corner of Market Street and the Cape Fear River, has become a Wilmington tradition. On offer is an interesting mixture of seafood and steak dishes. A zesty combination of spices in the ever-popular Char-Broiled Cajun Ribeye & Tuxedo Shrimp brings new sensations to an 8 oz. steak and shrimp wrapped in bacon and dipped in barbecue sauce ($21.95). Other mouth-watering entrées include Cioppino (seafood bouillabaisse), bite-sized pieces of fish, clams, mussels, scallops, oysters and shrimp simmered in a refreshingly light broth with cut vegetables and pasta ($15.95); and Crowned Seafood Wilmington, lightly steamed shrimp and scallops resting on a bed of crabmeat dressing pâté, crowned with herbed cream

sauce, surrounded by puff pastry points, and served with four open mussels ($18.95). Poultry lovers won't be disappointed in the chicken dishes, and you can add a lobster tail to any entrée for an extra $13.95. Roy's is open for lunch, Tuesday through Saturday from 11:30 am to 4 pm, for dinner seven nights a week between 4 pm and 10 pm. Sunday brunch is served from 11 am to 4 pm and the Lounge Bar is open to accommodate night owls, generally until 1 am.

Grouper Nancy's, ☎ 910-251-8009, 501 Nutt Street, is located in the old Coast Line Railroad freight terminal on the Cape Fear River. The ambiance indoors is light and airy, and a deck outside overlooking the river provides alfresco dining. For a tasty appetizer, we would suggest the Grand Marnier Sea Scallops, fresh sea scallops sautéed and deglazed with Grand Marnier, served over wilted greens with marinated orange zest ($7.95). If you fancy a salad, the very unusual Duck Breast Spinach Salad, honey-orange marinated duck breast grilled, sliced over spinach and Mandarin oranges, and served with raspberry vinaigrette ($7.25), may be to your taste. The signature entrée, Grouper Nancy, combines fresh grouper fillet with sautéed shrimp, scallions, tomatoes, black olives, green peppercorns, fresh herbs and lemon beurre blanc ($16.95). Two other interesting dishes are Bouillabaisse, oysters, clams, mussels, lobster meat and fish poached in white wine sauce with tomatoes and scallions ($19.95); and Marinated Lamb Chops, marinated in rosemary marinade, grilled and served with veal demi-glace ($18.95). Remember, though, to save a place for goodies from the dessert and cordial cart. Grouper Nancy's is open for dinner, Tuesday through Saturday, from 5:30 pm until late.

The **Nuss Strasse Café**, ☎ 910-763-5523, 316 Nutt Street, is on the first floor of the Cotton Exchange, and there are no prizes for guessing its ethnic origin. Owner, Caroland McFarlane, has been serving authentic German specialties here since 1985. Schnitzel, in many forms ($12.95 to $16.95), is prevalent on the menu, as are Wurst Platters – including Polish Kielbasa ($5.50 to $6.25), Sauerbraten ($12.95) and Potato Pancakes ($4.95). Add into the mix delicious homemade

breads, genuine European tortes and pastries, imported wines and, of course, German beer, and you feel as if you have been transported to another continent. Adding to the ambiance are old brick walls, exposed rafters and comely waitresses in traditional German costume. Taken altogether, the Nuss Strasse Café is about as close to a Bavarian small town inn as you are likely to find this side of the Atlantic.

Shops, Spas, etc.

To our minds, there is no question about where to go in Wilmington for the freshest and most beautiful flowers. The **Old Wilmington Florist**, ☎ 910-763-5558 or 800-858-6426, 114 Dock Street, stocks the freshest of roses and much more. In fact, Lyn Williams-Yow, the owner/designer, suggests a fresh and subtle idea. Send your loved one an orchid – she has plenty to choose from. You might also want to pop by the store as you are strolling about town. Lyn has put together a selection of home décor items: waterfalls, glass lamps, unique tabletop glasshouses for individual plants, and ceramic collectibles, to name a few. Any one would make a lovely reminder of your special weekend.

Just a short distance north of Wilmington, at 4508 Fountain Drive in the St. James Village Shopping Center, is the appealing lingerie store **Soft & Sassy**, ☎ 910-799-1880 or www.softnsassy.com. The owner, Mark Wilson, has carefully ferreted out a collection of long sexy gowns, Shirley of Hollywood teddies, bikini briefs and other exquisite lingerie just perfect for a romantic weekend. And, if you fancy some fun and games, he has those too. There are costumes (Cleopatra, waitress, policewoman, etc.), videos, essential oils, body powders, love cuffs, books on romance and edible undies. The more adult toys are not on show, but don't be too shy to ask for them.

Before leaving the store, capture a permanent reminder of your romantic weekend with a professional photographic portrait. Mark, a talented photographer, has dedicated a portion of the premises to **Mark Wilson Photography**, ☎ 910-452-2242 or

e-mail mwimages@wilmington.net. Perhaps you would like a romantic portrait of the two of you, or the more daring among you ladies may wish to pose in your new lingerie. Whatever your pleasure, a week or so before you plan on being in Wilmington, give Mark a call and arrange a time. Sessions cost $49.95, with the price of the photographs dependent upon your selection of prints and sizes.

Whether toasting your past fortunes in finding one another, to your present pleasure, or to a promising romantic future, the effervescence of champagne adds a festive touch. At the **Corkscrew**, ☎ 910-509-1650 or fax 509-1655, at the Landfall Shopping Center, owner/operators Lynn and Ken Lauder have assembled over 800 wines from around the world, including half-bottles and magnums of fine champagne. The impressive inventory has selections not often found – from Switzerland for example. There are also some lovely glasses here among the wide array of interesting accessories, including a collection of antique corkscrews. If cigars are your thing, then take a look inside the walk-in humidor, where you will find a wide assortment priced individually at $1.95 to $22 each. Lynn or Ken will also deliver customized gift baskets to your hotel. The Corkscrew is open Monday through Saturday from 10 am to 7 pm.

Wilmington has its share of day spas, and the one that was recommended to us is one that we, in turn, are very pleased to recommend to you. **Elizabeth's Esthetique Day Spa**, ☎ 910-799-1000 or fax 799-6772, 4002½ Oleander Drive, Oleander Office Park, Building G, is one of the oldest established in town. The facility is owned and operated by Ann Stoeber-Enos, who returned to her hometown to open the business in 1991. The spa offers a wide menu of treatments in a tranquil ambiance. In addition to an interesting selection of massages – Swedish, reflexology, meditative, lymphatic or a massage sampler – are an equally eclectic array of facial treatments, some designed especially for men, and facial treatment enhancements. Also available are aromatherapy manicures, therapeutic pedicures, sea glow spa pedicures and paraffin dips. Compared to other spas we have visited, the prices are reasonable indeed. For instance, the two-hour Renewal Package is comprised of a Euro-

pean facial and therapeutic massage and costs $85; the 3½-hour Spa Day, consisting of a European facial, therapeutic massage, pedicure and paraffin hand treatment, costs $120. No matter what treatment or combination of treatments you select, you are certain to leave Elizabeth's Esthetique Day Spa feeling refreshed, rejuvenated and serene – qualities conducive to a most romantic of weekends.

Imagine this if you want to set a course for a truly romantic weekend. You and your loved one are seated vis-à-vis in an elegant French evening coach gliding first past stately mansions and beautifully restored homes, then along the picturesque riverfront. From beneath the seat you produce a single red rose and declare to her your everlasting love and admiration. To make this your reality and create a treasured page for your memory book, contact Janet Pucci at **Springbrook Farms**, ☎ 910-251-8889 or fax 253-44895. It isn't inexpensive – $100 for an hour – but it will be worth it when you see your lady's eyes light up with love.

Those romantically inclined but on a bit more of a budget can create a similar scenario. Just turn up – no advance booking necessary – at the corner of Water and Market Streets. A costumed driver will assist you to board an eight-passenger surrey for a half-hour narrated tour. The cost is $8 per person. Tours are offered April through October, Tuesday through Sunday, 10 am to 10 pm; November, December and March, Friday, 7 pm to 10 pm, Saturday, 11 am and 10 pm, Sunday, 11 am to 4 pm. At certain other times of the year Janet holds some cute special tours. So, if you happen to be in town, look out for the Halloween Ghost Ride, Christmas Caroling, Easter Bunny Ride and, of particular interest to romantic weekenders, the Valentine Carriage Ride.

Bird feeding is an increasingly popular, and very peaceful, pastime and, once bitten by the bug, those with avian tendencies are always on the lookout for new additions to their feeders. **Wild Birds Unlimited**, ☎ 910-686-7210, www.wbu.com, 7223 Market Street, is your backyard bird-feeding specialist in Wilmington. It is just 10 minutes or so from downtown and conveniently located off the western side of the main road for those

traveling to or from the city. You can expect to find every kind of feeder imaginable in these franchised stores, but each shop, this one included, holds its unique surprises. We found the Andy Brinkley Studio Brass and Copper Birdhouses to be particularly innovative and attractive, and the model birds and indoor and outdoor fountains enticing. Look for assorted chimes, butterfly gardens, ornamental flower boxes, CDs and tapes, CD-ROM guides to North American birds, binoculars, books, and jewelry among the array of interesting items. Proprietors Merrill and Bonnie Holden also carry the ornamental and colorful Galileo Glass and Water Thermometersat at prices ranging from $47 to $95.

Before heading home, how would you like to take a bit of relaxation home with you? Hammocks and the beach have come to be synonymous and, by way of your own hammock, you can easily transport that same sense of laziness to your porch or back yard. In fact, what better vantage point can you think of from which to keep an eye on your birds? Make a beeline for **Outer Banks Hammocks, Inc.**, ☎ 910-256-4001, at 7228 Wrightsville Avenue, not too far from Wrightsville Beach itself. Before you make your selection, take a few moments to watch as experienced hammock makers weave together one or more of five unique and extraordinary items. Regular hammocks, the most familiar, come in three sizes: single, standard and double – that's the romantic one. They sell for $79, $89 and $99, respectively. The Hanging Chair, a variation of the same theme, is priced at $89. Those of you with porches will swoon over the Double Rope Porch Swings, at $149 each. Those preferring to keep feet closer to terra firma will be most interested in the Rope Deck Chair or Rope Rocker, each selling for $79. Both the materials and workmanship are guaranteed for two years. And, you will find a wide range of accessories as well.

Romantic weekenders will be delighted to discover a number of specialty stores within one of two historic sites in the downtown area that have been converted for that purpose.

The first such shopping cluster is found within what was, in the 19th century, the largest cotton exporting company in the world. The buildings in that complex were converted into a

three-story shopping and restaurant center in the late 1970s, the popularity of which paved the way for the downtown's redevelopment. As a complement to its commercial enterprises, the **Cotton Exchange**, ☎ 910-343-9896, 321 North Front Street, displays photographs and exhibits of its history and, with its glorious views overlooking the Cape Fear River, it is a "must see" for visitors to Wilmington. An informative brochure available at the Cotton Exchange details the history of each building and gives a listing of their present occupants. As a foretaste of what you can expect to find, let us introduce you to our favorite among these many, many stores. Actually, **The Basket Case, "Uncustomary Gifts**," ☎ 910-763-3956, 308 Nutt Street, was the first store to open within the Cotton Exchange, in 1979. Owner Jean S. Hanson delights in her colorful collection of unusual gifts, particularly her lifelike collection of puppets, which she just loves to animate for patrons. We couldn't leave without a most realistic bulldog puppet. You'll also find Guardian Angel Dogs, Sandy Cast Animals, hand-painted garments "By Julia," Rick Cain sculptures, and Victorian antique button jewelry, just to name a few.

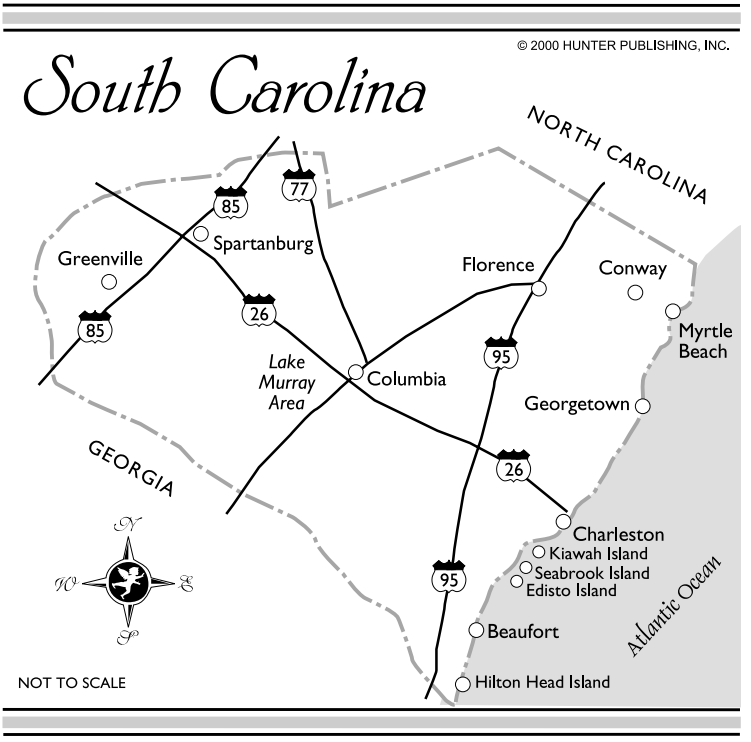
En route to **Chandler's Wharf**, the second of the historic shopping sites, you will stroll along North Front Street, where bright and colorful window displays vie to distract you from your mission. One in particular deserves a dalliance. **Nautical Hangups Gift & Gallery**, ☎ 800-545-1847, fax 910-763-8874, e-mail mooreart@nauticalhangups.com, at 24 North Front Street, offers models of lighthouses and items with a lighthouse motif, model wooden sailing ships, hand-carved fish, Afghans, tapestries, T-shirts and much, much more. Their website is at www.nauticalhangups.com.

Nautical Hangups is most recognized as the home port of the famous Waterways Collection by artist Terry Moore. Terry, a native of Wilmington, and holder of degrees in history, philosophy and religion from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, is a self-taught artist who had a vision of capturing the spirit and beauty of America's spectacular coastline. Augmenting his physical depictions, Terry introduces elements of cartography and history, resulting in what he has

dubbed geographic or geo-art. To date he has covered 95% of America's coastline, and the collection is ever growing. Finally, accompanying each of Terry's paintings are two things, a rabbit and a poem. "Why?" you may ask. Well, as to the rabbit, Terry points out that, in ancient cultures, this creature was associated with good luck. To him, each rabbit is a personal reminder of his own luck in making his living from doing something he loves so dearly. Also, he hopes the lucky rabbit will bring some of the same to those who support his artwork and personal dream. Insofar as the poem is concerned, multi-talented Terry is a guitarist, a lutenist, and a lover of language. He therefore enhances each visual interpretation with a short, but intense, composition reflecting his thoughts on the subject.

You can buy prints, note cards and other accessories, but never one of the original oil paintings. Fully expecting that, upon completion, the collection's worth will escalate dramatically, Terry plans for the originals to be auctioned off, with the receipts donated to children's charities in each of the regions.

Time now to disengage yourself from distractions and make your way to the corner of Water and Ann Streets and the charming area known as **Chandler's Wharf**. Here, a restored warehouse, dating from the late 19th century, and the surrounding cobblestone streets, have been cleverly transformed into a preserve of untold specialty stores, and a smattering of restaurants, some of which we will describe later. Here, you shop to your heart's content, dine or snack in pleasant surroundings, and enjoy lovely views overlooking the Cape Fear River.



South Carolina

Beaufort

History

Although it has been established that native Indians lived in this area perhaps as long ago as 4,000 years ago, its written history did not begin until the early 16th century. In 1514, a Spaniard, Captain Pedro de Salazar, arrived to explore the Beaufort region. Thus, it gained the distinction of being the

second landing site on the North American continent, after Ponce de León's arrival at St. Augustine, Florida. What Salazar found was one of the largest natural harbors on the Atlantic coast, an asset that did not go unnoticed. The Spanish named a short-lived settlement here Punta de Santa Elena – since anglicized to St. Helena – but later they withdrew to concentrate their forces at St. Augustine. In 1562, Captain Jean Ribaut, a French Huguenot, established a small settlement almost within sight of present-day Beaufort at Charlesfort, calling the area Port Royal. This, the first of the Protestant settlements in the United States, was ill-fated, however. Upon Ribaut's return to France to recruit reinforcements, the soldiers left behind revolted, built a ship – considered to be the first American-built craft to cross the Atlantic Ocean, and returned to France.

English settlers did not arrive on the scene until over a century later. In 1670, under the auspices of the Lord's Proprietors, they founded Charles Towne, which would soon be known as Charleston. However, it was not until very early in the 18th century, 1711 actually, that the first permanent settlement, a seaport, was laid out on this site and named in honor of Henry Somerset, Duke of Beaufort. St. Helena's parish Anglican Church was established here a year later, but Beaufort, the second oldest town in South Carolina, almost wasn't so. It barely survived an attack by local Yemassee Indians in 1715. Soon, plantations growing rice and indigo flourished but, being labor intensive, their success depended upon large numbers of African slaves – so many that they formed the majority of the population.

Thomas Hayward of Beaufort, a local rice plantation owner, was among the influential men instrumental in bringing on the Revolutionary War by their signatures on Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence. With the war came the occupation by British troops. In the heavy battles and skirmishes fought in South Carolina, the state lost more men to the conflict than any other colony. Lost, also, was the trade in indigo, as England had provided its main market.

Luckily, a replacement crop was soon found, in the form of Sea Island cotton. And, with the brief exception of the War of 1812, the years leading up to the Civil War were ones of great prosperity and growth for Beaufort. The town's favorable location, on the water and with a southern exposure, meant cooler temperatures and fewer mosquitoes than inland on the rice and cotton plantations. Recognizing this, wealthy plantation owners of the period built fabulous mansions along the Beaufort River, designed as much for entertaining as for living.

The Civil War, however, was on the horizon and with it came an abrupt end to this elegant way of life and profound changes to Beaufort. By 1860, secessionist sentiment was rampant. That year, under the leadership of Southerners such as Beaufortonian Robert Barnwell Rhett, the Ordinance of Secession was penned in what is now known as Secession House, on Craven Street.

The secession proved disastrous for South Carolina, and most particularly for Beaufort. Union forces, recognizing the necessity of controlling a secure port on the southern Atlantic coast, sent an invasion force of 30,000 by sea in November 1861. And, thus, Beaufort would remain occupied throughout the course of the war. In reaction to advance warning of the attack, the majority of white citizens fled the area, taking with them only what they could carry. Their glorious homes were left behind, virtually intact, along with over 10,000 slaves who had worked their plantations. It is, perhaps, ironic that this occupation, ruinous economically, actually served to save the town from physical destruction as Union troops commandeered these homes for their purposes. The John Mark Verdier House on Bay Street, for example, served as the Union Army headquarters and the Episcopal and Baptist churches, among others, served as hospitals.

Knowing that the owners were absent for the duration of the conflict, the US Government cunningly imposed a Federal real estate tax on both the homes and the land. When these were not paid, it quickly confiscated the property. The homes were auctioned to Union soldiers and civilians, while the plantations were subdivided into 40-acre tracts and sold for nominal

amounts to the newly freed slaves. These newly independent farmers were taught trades at the Penn Normal School that opened in 1862 on St. Helena Island. In Beaufort, blacks outnumbered whites by more than seven to one during this period, and one of them, Robert Smalls, a former slave and Civil War hero, became one of the first black representatives to the United States Congress.

In the 1890s thousands of acres of local land were sold to private hunt clubs frequented primarily by wealthy Northerners. These prestigious establishments added substantially to their land holdings when the Federal government released lands in 1931. A small US Naval station established on Parris Island was destined to evolve into a major Marine Corps Recruit Depot, which, along with a Naval Air Station, opened in 1941. This complex now forms the core of Beaufort's economic health. More recently, however, tourism has come to play a major role as well. Beginning in the 1970s, Beaufort gained favor as a location site for the film industry. Movie lovers will certainly recognize a familiar setting or two from *Forrest Gump* and *The War*.

These days, Beaufort is a quiet, picturesque little town, with an antebellum style. In sum, it is a splendid place, well endowed with inns, B&Bs, restaurants and other such attractions that, when combined, create a quaint ambiance for a wonderfully romantic weekend.

Things to Do

If you can arrange it, start your trip at the **Greater Beaufort Chamber of Commerce and Beaufort Visitors Center**, ☎ 843-524-3163, e-mail chamber@beaufortsc.org, or www.beaufort.com, 1106 Carteret Street. They are open daily between 9 am and 5:30 pm, and have all manner of useful information and publications. Be sure to pick up a copy or two of the complimentary "Map of Historic Beaufort and Islands." If you are connected to the Internet then you may want to do a little virtual exploration at www.beaufort-sc.com, which has an on-

line walking tour of Beaufort. And, if you are really intent on historical exploration, the "Historic Port Royal Walking Tour" is available from the **Historic Port Royal Foundation**, ☎ 843-524-4333, 1004 11th Street, Port Royal, SC 29935.

A good, and quick, way to become better acquainted with Beaufort is to book an organized tour. **Historic Beaufort Tours and Transportation**, ☎ 843-522-3576 or 888-747-8687, at 1002-B Bay Street, offers a one-hour professionally narrated horse-drawn carriage tour for $14.50 per person, which passes over 85 antebellum houses along its leisurely way. Unfortunately, most of these, except those that now function as inns, B&Bs and museums, are in private hands, and not open to the public. There are two occasions each year, however, one in spring and one in the fall, when some of their doors do open, allowing you to pass through and get a glimpse of an ultra-elegant lifestyle. **St. Helena's Episcopal Church** has sponsored annual Spring Tours for over 44 years. In 1999 these were comprised of a Friday evening Candlelight Walking Tour of selected homes in Beaufort, priced at $25, and a Saturday Lowcountry Tour of local plantations. The latter included a plantation lunch and entertainment at a cost of $35 per person. Both are operated by **E.C.W. Tours**, ☎ 843-524-0363, PO Box 1043, Beaufort, SC 29901. Those interested should be advised that tickets are limited and non-refundable. In the fall, the Historic Beaufort Foundation sponsors the **Fall Festival of Houses & History**, which will be celebrating its 16th anniversary in 2000. This lasts longer than one weekend, and we suggest you call ahead to ☎ 843-524-6334 for the exact dates and schedule.

From among the more important of the buildings open for public tour, let us introduce you to three.

Beaufort Arsenal Museum, ☎ 843-525-7077, 713 Craven St., was originally built in 1798, rebuilt in 1852, and at one time housed the Beaufort Volunteer Artillery (BVA), the fifth oldest military unit in the United States. It was converted into a museum in 1939 and today houses an interesting collection of local Indian artifacts and art, relics of the American Revolutionary and Civil Wars, weapons, fossils and all sorts of planta-

tion memorabilia. It is open on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 10 am to 5 pm.

The **John Mark Verdier House**, ☎ 843-524-6334, 801 Bay Street, was built by one of Beaufort's most successful merchants and its history is interwoven with that of the town. The Marquis de Lafayette visited the home in 1825, and during the occupation of Beaufort in the Civil War it served as headquarters for the commanding Union general. Today, fully restored and furnished with antiques of the period, it stands as an excellent example of Federal-style architecture. Visit Tuesday through Saturday between the hours of 11 am and 4:30 pm.

St. Helena's Episcopal Church, ☎ 843-522-1712, 501 Church Street, dates from around 1724, but traces its beginnings to the founding of the parish in 1712. It is one of the oldest active churches in the United States. The architectural style is classically Colonial, and of special interest is the wooden altar carved by the crew of the *USS New Hampshire* while stationed here during the Reconstruction period following the Civil War. In the graveyard you can see tombstones that were used as operating tables during the Civil War, and a brick tomb built by a local doctor who suffered from an inordinate fear of being buried alive. He arranged to be laid to rest inside the tomb, which was stocked with food and an axe so that, if his worst fears were realized, he could escape. Needless to say, the axe was never used. St. Helena's is open Monday through Saturday from 10 am to 4 pm.

You might also consider spending a short time at the **North Street Public Aquarium**, ☎ 843-524-1559, 608 North Street. This was the first public aquarium in South Carolina and is open Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 10 am to 6 pm. Perhaps of more interest, though, and certainly more unusual, the Aquarium offers a Riverwalk and Aquarium Tour, a1½-hour guided tour of the border connecting historic downtown Beaufort and the river. You will learn how a salt marsh estuarine river system functions, in layman's terms, and have a chance for an up-close and personal view of the creatures that inhabit the local waters as you learn about their habits and life cycles. Walks are scheduled within a two-hour period on either side of

low tide, and are available seven days a week, weather and tide permitting. It is wise to make reservations at least one day in advance. The cost is $15 per person, and the tour will proceed with a minimum of two participants. Why not, then, try to arrange a private tour just for you two?

You haven't fully seen Beaufort until you have viewed it from the water. To do just that, head off to the marina where, at 2 pm daily and for a reasonable $17 per person, you can cruise the river aboard the ***Islander***, ☎ 843-524-4000, fax 757-9304 or www.islandercruises.com. The ship's design is reminiscent of the coastal steamers that carried passengers, freight and mail between Charleston and Savannah at the turn of the century. Throughout a very enjoyable 1¾-hour sail, the captain offers an entertaining and highly informative running (well, sailing) commentary, as you pass to the southern end of Parris Island, where you will have panoramic views of Hilton Head to the south and the Fripp Islands to the north. Along the way, watch for frolicking Atlantic bottlenose dolphins, numerous wading birds, and a variety of other wildlife.

At the riverside, **Waterfront Park** is home to three interesting events each year. The **Water Festival** runs for 10 days each July and, in October, you can treat your taste buds to the **Shrimp Festival** and the **Beaufort By The Bay Winefest**. These will be celebrating their 45th, sixth and 10th anniversaries, respectively, in 2000. Contact the Convention & Visitors Bureau for information: ☎ 843-524-3163, e-mail chamber@beaufortsc.org, or www.beaufort.com.

Not far from Beaufort are two quite distinctive attractions that may interest history buffs.

First, the **Parris Island Museum**, ☎ 843-525-2951, is in the War Memorial Building at the Marine Corps Recruiting Depot, 10 miles south of Beaufort. This museum is dedicated to the history and development of Parris Island and the Port Royal area, with an emphasis on Marine Corps recruit training and the history of the Marine Corps in the 20th century. And, there is quite a history to be told. A naval yard was constructed on Parris Island in 1883, and it grew to support a Marine barracks

that was established not quite a decade later in 1891. Upon the closure of the Port Royal Navy Yard in 1911, the complex was used as a Navy brig (prison) before being handed over to the Marine Corps in 1915 for use as a recruit depot. Here, over 46,000 marines trained for World War I duty and more than 204,000 prepared for World War II. The island could accommodate as many as 20,000 servicemen at a given time. We were interested to learn that women, who have been an integral part of the Marine Corps since 1943 – first as reservists and then, beginning in 1949, as a permanent members of the Corps – train at Parris Island only. Over 1,000,000 marines have graduated from this base and, these days, some 18,000 men and 1,500 women complete training here every year. The museum is open daily with the exception of the holidays of Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's and Easter, from 10 am to 4:30 pm. If you are interested in seeing more of everyday life at Parris Island, the **Parris Island Visitor's Center**, ☎ 843-525-3650 or 525-3297, offers free narrated tours every Saturday through Wednesday at 1 pm. You must make a reservation at least one day in advance. Also open to the public is a Friday Colors Ceremony at 8 am, followed by Recruit Graduation at 9:15 am.

The second of our more unusual attractions is the **Penn Center**, ☎ 843-838-2432 or 838-2235, Martin Luther King Drive on St. Helena Island, a museum dedicated to the history of a unique and historically important school. Penn School, founded in 1862 by northern missionaries and named in honor of the first African-American to practice medicine on St. Helena Island, is the only public educational facility listed on the National Register of the Department of the Interior. The first school in the South dedicated to the education of Blacks, it taught the history and culture of the Gullah people and the West African connection. Today, it houses a museum that displays artifacts and farm and blacksmith tools from throughout the school's history. It is open Monday through Friday from 11 am to 4 pm and Saturday from 10 am to 4 pm.

So that you can better grasp the significance of Penn School, let us explain a bit about the Gullahs and their heritage. The climatic conditions of West Coast Africa and the Sea Islands of

South Carolina are similar, both being conducive to the cultivation of a rice crop. Quite naturally, owners of rice plantations in the New World saw the value of acquiring slaves experienced in rice farming – namely the Gullah people of West Africa. And so it followed that, while most slave peoples were separated from one another to negate the chances of a rebellion, the Gullahs were, just as deliberately, kept together to capitalize upon their farming abilities. It was fortuitous for them, also, that the slave owners had an aversion to the hot and humid climate and a healthy fear of its accompanying scourge of malaria – to which the slaves had developed a resistance. Thus their owners more or less left the Gullahs to themselves, knowing that in any event living on the islands left them few opportunities for escape. In staying together, the Gullahs retained their traditional ways of life and, consequently, still share many social similarities with people from the coast of West Africa, particularly those of Sierra Leone and Senegal. If you want to discover more about this fascinating African-American culture, then contact **Gullah 'n Geechie Mahn**, ☎ 843-838-7516 or 838-6312, on St. Helena Island. This group operates three two-hour tours a day, at a cost of $17 per person. There is also a Gullah Festival every May in Beaufort.

Surrounding Beaufort, as you might expect, the fishing opportunities are superb. If you are a serious angler, though, before heading for the water, head for the center of town. **Bay Street Outfitters**, ☎ 843-524-5250, fax 524-9002 or e-mail Baystoutfr@aol.com, at 815 Bay Street, is the place for shallow-water fly-fishermen to go. Tony Royal, the owner, has gathered together the most qualified guides and instructors on the South Carolina coast to lead half-day ($250 per couple) or full-day ($400 per couple) charters. These scour the literally hundreds of miles of tide waters and grassy marshes, looking for reds, giant cobia, jacks, ladyfish or trout. You can be assured that, year-round, there are plenty of fish out there, but expect the approach and methods to change on a seasonal basis. No license is required on these charters, the price of which includes drinks on a half-day trip and drinks and a hearty lunch on the full-day trip. Come prepared, with deck or tennis shoes, hat,

polarized sunglasses, seasonal clothing, sunscreen, raingear and a camera.

If, once you arrive, you find you have come up a little short in the way of preparation, don't despair. You can find what you will need, from incidentals to full fishing gear, at the **Bay Street Outfitters Store**. They carry a wide selection of rods – including the new TL series, and a full range of tackle. They also provide rod repair service. Even if fishing isn't one of your main interests, we suggest that you stop at this Orvis dealer and Orvis-endorsed outfitter. The clothing, not just for sporting exercises, is practical, stylish and great for everyday wear. You will also find an impressive selection of Battenkill luggage; waterproof gear; binoculars; Victorinox knives, watches, and, their latest innovation, the Swiss Tool; decoys; books; super-deluxe Orvis dog nests to keep your pooch resting comfortably; a cigar corner and a well-stocked women's wear section.

Bay Street Outfitters also operates a One-Day Fishing School, segregated for men and women, and a Two-Day Redfish School, teaching advanced techniques, on certain days during the year. Call for more information, if these interest you.

Maybe, though, you have a penchant for deep-sea or Gulf Stream fishing. If that is the case, we recommend Captain "Wally" Phinney, who has operated **Sea Wolf Charters**, ☎ 843-525-1174, 5003 Luella Street, Beaufort, SC 29906, for 17 years. Captain Wally, US Army retired, who has been acquainted with local waters since 1946, received the highest national award for safety within the US Power Squadrons (Life Saving Award), in recognition of his rescue of three people from a sinking vessel 20 miles offshore in six-foot seas. He is also a Scuba Master Instructor and has gleaned a vast knowledge of local reefs and wrecks from diving in local waters since 1979. He knows which fish prefer each place and when they are likely to frequent it. And, he puts his knowledge to good working use. In fact, a 6 ft. 7 in.-long, 104-lb. wahoo, a mere five lbs. below the state record, was caught on one of his charters. Captain Wally's super speedy boat is powered by twin turbo-charged diesel engines of 250 hp. each and is in compliance with all USCG standards. Departures are from Low Country Waters,

Beaufort, and choices are a half-day trip at $330, a ¾-day trip at $430 or a full-day trip at $600. If you have your hearts set on going all the way to the Gulf Stream, then expect to pay $1,100 for a day's trip.

Another place well worth a visit, both for its beaches and its natural attributes, is the 5,000-acre **Hunting Island State Park**, ☎ 843-838-2011 or www.southcarolinaparks.com. Found 16 miles east of Beaufort on Highway 21 at 1775 Sea Island Parkway, St. Helena, SC, 29920, this park, with an ocean beach more than four miles long, is one of the most popular in the state. The name originates from its former use for hunting. In today's less threatening environment, it is home to as many as 125 species of birds, white-tailed deer and raccoons. Look also for specimens of South Carolina's State Tree, the palmetto, otherwise known as the "cabbage palm." On the southern edge of the park, the Lagoon is a great place for surfcasting. Alternatively, privately owned **Paradise Fishing Pier**, ☎ 843-838-5455, extends 1,120 feet into Fripp Inlet. A visitor's center by the park's entrance features topical displays and the park naturalist conducts organized educational programs along the two nature trails or the marsh boardwalk. Undoubtedly, though, the highlight of your visit will be the historic 136-foot high, 19th-century **lighthouse**, ☎ 843-838-2011, the only one of the seven South Carolina lighthouses open to the public. Between 10 am and 5 pm you can climb to the top, if you have the necessary mental and physical disposition, for a magnificent view overlooking the island and coastline. Park hours are 6 am to 9 pm daily from April to October, and 6 am to 6 pm the remainder of the year.

Nature lovers will want to see the largest pristine estuarine preserve on the East Coast, just to the northeast of Beaufort. There, the Ashepoo, Combahee and Edisto rivers combine in the St. Helena Sound to form what is known as the ACE Basin. The **ACE Basin National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR)**, ☎ 843-762-5437, PO Box 12559, Charleston, SC 29422-2559, was established in 1992 and is responsible for over 140,000 acres of winding tidal creeks, brackish and salt marshes, barrier and marsh islands and other biologically rich

areas. It is home to many endangered, or threatened, species and a mecca for both commercial and recreational fishermen. While the ACE Basin offers walking tours and workshops, we think the best way of getting to know this natural wonderland is to contact **ACE Basin Tours, Inc.**, ☎ 843-521-3099 or 888-814-3129, One Coosaw River Drive, Beaufort, SC 29902, and arrange for a tour. USCG-certified and licensed Captain Stan Lawson will welcome you aboard his **Dixie Lady**, a 38-foot covered pontoon boat, for an approximately three-hour cruise among the tidal marshes and Sea Islands. You will be treated to both history and nature lessons by Captain Stan, a lifelong resident of the area. As you glide past plantations and abandoned rice fields, you will likely see dolphins, alligators, eagles, ospreys, raccoons, minks, otters, deer, and more species of birds than you can possibly count. Tours are by reservation only, cost $25 per person, and depart from Coosaw Island, just nine miles northeast of Beaufort.

You may want to see this area from a closer perspective. If that description fits you, we suggest that you contact **The Kayak Farm**, ☎ 843-838-2008, 1289 Sea Island Parkway, St. Helena Island, SC 29920. They invite you, following personal instruction in safety and in the proper use and selection of equipment, to take a half-day tour at $45 per person or a full-day tour at $65 per person. In this area, where the land meets the water, there are any number of possible excursions to choose from, with each nature tour including equipment, guides and expedition lunch or snack. Or, if you prefer, rent a kayak yourself, half-day for $30 or full-day for $35, which includes a lightweight feathered paddle and a professional PFD (personal flotation device). Necky, Current Designs or Heritage Kayaks manufacture all of their kayaks, and first-time paddlers are both welcomed and encouraged.

Sweet Dreams

The **Rhett House Inn**, ☎ 843-524-9030, 888-480-9530, fax 524-1310, e-mail rhetthse@hargray.com, www.innbook.com/rhett.html, 1009 Craven Street, is a most imposing mansion in-

deed. Originally built in 1820 and restored after the Civil War, it boasts a magnificent Greek Revival façade with a double wraparound veranda, supported by elegant columns, and a curved staircase leading to the first floor. Owned and operated by Marianne and Steve Harrison, it is a particularly gracious inn, having earned Mobil Four-Star and AAA Four-Diamond ratings. It has been featured as a location shoot for movies such as *Forrest Gump, Prince of Tides* and *G.I. Jane*, and has hosted such guests as Barbra Streisand, Demi Moore, Sharon Stone and Robert Redford.

There are 17 exquisitely appointed guest rooms, 10 in the main house and seven in the newly renovated historic cottage. Each is sumptuously furnished with English and American antiques and oriental rugs, and colorfully and fragrantly enhanced by fresh-cut flowers. Modern amenities include cable TV, telephone, CD player and a private bathroom equipped with hairdryer and robes. Eight rooms offer the added luxury of a fireplace and whirlpool bath, some are wheelchair accessible, and rates range from $150 to $250 per night. The tariff includes a delicious breakfast, afternoon tea and evening hors d'oeuvres. Picnic baskets, beer, wine and liquor are available on request.

The **Beaufort Inn & Restaurant**, ☎ 843-521-9000, fax 521-9500, 809 Port Republic Street, was built in 1897 by a prominent Hampton attorney as his second home. It was sold in the 1930s, renovated, and, subsequently, opened as The Beaufort Inn, one of Beaufort's first boarding houses. Following another change of hands and prior to its most recent reopening in July of 1994, Debbie and Russell Fielden initiated an extensive renovation and expansion, with the assistance of some of the area's most skilled craftsmen and artisans. Very soon thereafter, it was awarded a AAA Four-Diamond rating. Inside, rich mahogany trim work, marble and slate fireplaces, warm heart pine floors, and a prominent stairway curling around the 50-

foot-high atrium to form the mezzanine levels, create a spectacularly romantic ambiance. Each of the 13 guest rooms and junior suites, including two in the Carnegie House just behind the inn, is luxuriously furnished to create a distinctive character and décor, tastefully blended with the expected modern amenities. Some rooms have a fireplace, wet bar, stocked refrigerator and Jacuzzi tub. Rates vary from $125 to $225 a night. This includes a full gourmet breakfast with such delicacies as Daufuskie Island Poached Eggs (two poached eggs on sautéed crab cakes), which may, upon request, be served in your room. A complimentary afternoon tea is served each day by reservation. You can e-mail the Beaufort Inn at bftinn@hargray.com, or check their website at www.beaufortinn.com.

The **Cuthbert House Inn**, ☎ 843-521-1315, 800-327-9275 (reservations only between 9 am and 9 pm), fax 521-1314, e-mail cuthbert@hargray.com, www.cuthbert-bb-beaufort.com, 1203 Bay Street, is the only one of the inns detailed here that directly overlooks the waterway. Built in 1790, the building is on the National Historic Register, and the inn holds a AAA Three-Diamond rating. The pleasant façade features a small stairway leading to a first floor, where a bayed verandah supports with four tall columns a central veranda above it. Gary and Sharon Groves, the innkeepers, have brought a warm ambiance to the interior with a collection of mid-19th-century heirlooms, and the seven guest rooms and suites blend the best of the past with modern facilities. These include television, telephone, in-room refrigerator, and individually controlled air conditioning and heat. Rates range from $145 to $205.

Tables for Two

The **Beaufort Inn Grill Room & Wine Bar**, ☎ 843-521-9000, 809 Port Republic Street, occupying the first floor of the Beaufort Inn, has been awarded the coveted AAA Four-Diamond recognition. Opening every day at 5 pm with no reservations needed it, naturally, features many seafood dishes. For an appetizer, usually in the $9 range and with a Southern flair, you might be offered Lowcountry Shrimp and Parmesan Grits; Crab and Crawfish Cake with Pecan Crust; or Cornmeal Tasso Blini with Poached Oysters. The entrées are varied and not inexpensive. Wasabi Seared Giant Scallops are priced at $22, Prime Black Angus Filet Mignon at $27.50, Crisp Sliced Duck Breast at $22 and, rather unusually, a Chef's Game Selection – featuring seasonal game from around the world – is offered at market prices.

You can take it to the bank that, at **The Bank Waterfront Grill & Bar**, ☎ 843-522-8831, 926 Bay Street, you will find, at lunchtime or during the dinner hour, a wide variety of tasty meals. As you will see when you arrive, it really was, at one time, a bank. And it certainly makes a statement, with credit due to the management, that you won't have to overdraw your account to satisfy your appetites. The "Beginning Balance," as they cleverly refer to the appetizer menu, includes onions, artichokes, mushrooms, nachos, chicken fingers and a whole range of shrimp dishes priced at $3.95 to $10.95, with most being in the middle range. Salads, too, are a house specialty, with no less than 22 options and prices in the $6.95 and $7.95 range. Sandwiches are prevalent and also inexpensive. Seafood, as you would expect, is dominant among the main courses but look also for delicious pastas and an array of Black Angus steak plates. Entrées are modestly priced at $13.95 to $18.95.

Ollies By The Bay, ☎ 843-524-2500, 822 Bay Street, shares a similar menu and light-hearted ambiance with its counterpart, **Ollies Seafood Restaurant**, ☎ 843-525-6333, at 71 Sea Island Parkway on Lady's Island. Ollie, as the menu will tell you, is an oyster. The narration continues to explain that these tasty morsels were so numerous in surrounding waters that they were processed and packed in local factories, and shipped all over the country. No surprise, then, that these little guys feature on the menus, steamed or raw, by the half-dozen ($5.95), baker's dozen ($7.95) or bucket ($12.95), and even as an oyster sandwich ($6.95). The rest of the dishes have a seafood emphasis, of course, but with enough steaks, chicken, pasta and sandwiches ($6.95 to $17.95) to keep everyone happy.

Shops, Spas, etc.

Roses are often more eloquent than words in expressing your love. When in Beaufort, call **Bitty's Flower Shop**, ☎ 843-524-4547, 1202 Boundary Street, and arrange for a dozen or more of these fresh and fragrant beauties to be awaiting the arrival of your nearest and dearest in the room of your choice.

Beaufort also has a classy day spa. The **Bayside Salon and Day Spa**, ☎ 843-522-9095, 310 Scotts Street, is just the place to go if you and your partner want a little pampering. Take your choice of a variety of facials ($50 to $65); an unusual Essential Back Treatment ($50/45 minutes); a range of massages ($50 to $60 for one hour); and a selection of body treatments, including a Herbal Body Masque Wrap ($65).

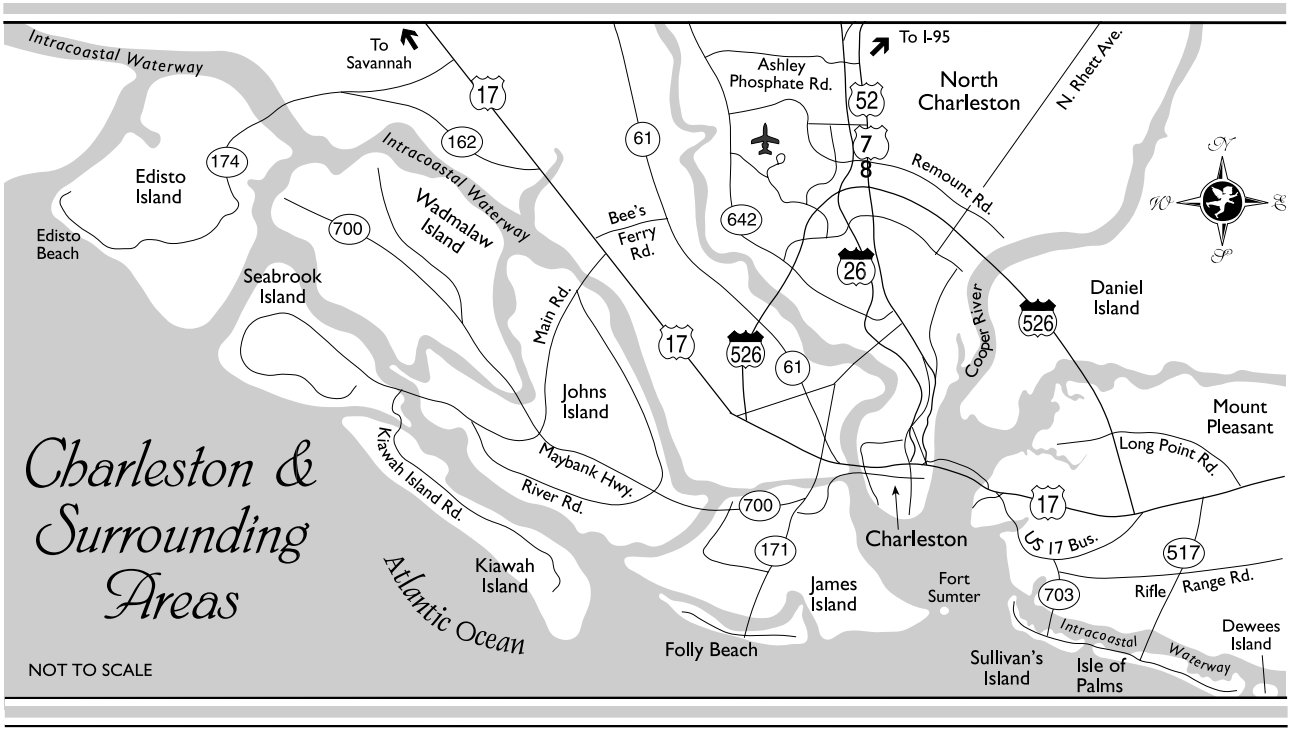
Shopping lovers should take a stroll along Bay Street, where you will find a number of Beaufort's more interesting gift shops. Then, wandering one block off Bay Street, make your way to the corner of Port Republic and West Streets to **Bubba's by the Bay**, ☎ 843-524-B005. As they like to say, they "are off

the beaten path, but on the right track." Among a colorful and unusually eclectic array of gifts, you will find interesting hand-carved animals and birds – with some storks and herons standing an imposing six feet tall; wooden fish wall hangings from the Philippines; wind chimes and metal North Country wind bells from Maine; wooden angels offering a serenade upon their harps, fashioned by Paul Weir; and a lighthouse collection. Look, also, for a boat corner, replicas of Civil War guns, and a rather ghoulish collection of alligator heads. As it happens, these creatures are not uncommon in this part of the world. Animal lovers need not be concerned that these have been hunted. They were farm-raised and these are the rather grizzly remnants.

Changing tack, and on to a much sweeter course, make the short journey down Carteret Street to number 507. Here you will find **The Chocolate Tree**, ☎ 843-524-7980 or 800-524-7980, where, since 1980, delectable chocolates and other confections have been produced on the premises. Open Monday through Saturday from 10 am to 6 pm and Sunday from 1 to 5 pm, it is certainly the place to go to sweeten up your weekend, and the candy makes a tasteful gift for those back home.

Charleston

The name Charleston evokes visions of the grandeur and graciousness of bygone times. Even today, few of the present day's more garish extremes have been allowed to distract from the beauty of this city, whose considerable history cloaks it in civility and charm.



South Carolina

History

Although it is known that Native Americans lived in the vicinity of present-day Charleston, the first English settlers did not arrive until 1670. The chain of events that led to its colonization were set in motion a full seven years earlier. On March 24, 1663, King Charles II, in repayment for political support in the battle against Oliver Cromwell to regain his throne, granted eight eminent supporters a charter to a vast portion of land in the New World. This bestowed upon the Earl of Clarendon, Duke of Albemarle, Lord Craven, Lord Berkeley, Sir William Berkeley, Lord Ashley, Sir George Carteret and Sir John Colleton (also known as the Lord Proprietors) the right to govern those lands and to exact a profit, in any way they wished, with only King Charles retaining ultimate control. In the King's honor the land was named "Carolina" – the Latin variation of Charles. In 1666, Captain Sanford took formal possession, on behalf of the Lords Proprietors, of the Carolinas. He named the two rivers, which flow around what was to become the City of Charleston, the Ashley and the Cooper – in tribute to Lord Ashley Anthony Cooper, the most influential of the lords. It will come as no surprise either that the names Albemarle and Carteret feature prominently as well on modern-day maps of the eastern United States.

It was Lord Cooper's secretary, the philosopher John Locke, who made provisional plans for a new town and authored "The Fundamental Constitution of Carolina," which was approved by the Lords Proprietors in 1669. The Constitution's edict specifying the guarantee of religious freedom would have a deep and lasting impact on Charleston's social development, attracting the immigration of diverse religious groups.

In that same year, 1669, the first Carolina colonists sailed from London in three vessels, the *Albemarle*, the *Port Royal* and the *Carolina*. Upon reaching Barbados, hurricane winds destroyed the first and damaged the other two. Finally, in the spring of

1670, the *Carolina* arrived in the Ashley River, and the first settlement, aptly named "Charles Towne," was founded at Albemarle Point (now known as Charles Towne Landing). Beginning in 1680 and increasing dramatically upon Louis XIV's 1685 revocation of the Edict of Nantes, which had guaranteed the safety of the Huguenots in France, large numbers of French Huguenots came to settle in Charles Towne. By 1690, the population of the city was estimated at 1,200, making it the fifth largest in North America. It was at that time also that the city was officially moved to its present location and fortified with a wall, whose design included six bastions and a draw-bridged gate. Charleston, thus, would be further distinguished as one of only a handful of walled cities to be built in North America. The close of the 17th century brought great tribulation to Charles Towne, in the form of small pox and yellow fever epidemics, outbreaks of fire, an earthquake and a hurricane. Nevertheless, by the turn of the century, business generated by the plantations that lined the inland rivers had transformed Charles Towne into major trading center. Its constitution, unlike those of most other Colonial cities, ensured religious diversity and, during this period also, French Huguenots, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Jews, among others, flocked to the city seeking both religious freedom and economic opportunities. The dozens of historic houses of worship that can be seen in Charleston today stand in reverent testimony to this era, earning it the sobriquet "The Holy City."

In 1712, the territory of Carolina was subdivided into the Colonies of North and South Carolina, with a governor being appointed for each. The following year, the Powder Magazine at 79 Cumberland Street, and the oldest public building in the city and now a museum, began operation. In 1718, Blackbeard the Pirate, taking advantage of the removal of city fortifications to allow for expansion, carried out the boldest of his attacks upon Charles Towne itself. You can read in more detail

about his exploits and capture in the *Crystal Coast* chapter of this guide. This and other aggressions left citizens feeling vulnerable, and gave rise to a hail of protests directed against the Lords Proprietors for their failure to protect the land. In 1719, a Revolutionary Assembly convened, requesting the intervention of the King. Two years later, in 1721, South Carolina was declared a Royal Colony and placed under the governorship of General Sir Francis Nicholson. The change of ownership became official on July 25th, 1729, at which time King George bought out the interest of the Lords Proprietors.

By 1742, Charles Towne boasted a population of 6,800 and ranked fourth in size among all North American cities. Its ever-increasing wealth was based on trade in rice and the permanent blue dye, indigo. Such prosperity gave rise to a sophisticated and lavish lifestyle that was renowned around the world. Elegant architecture became one of the city's trademarks, and many of the more impressive homes and public buildings date from this period leading up to the Revolutionary War. As its fortunes increased, Charles Towne became increasingly dependent upon the contribution of thousands of slaves. West Coast African slaves were the most in demand, particularly for their knowledge of the cultivation of rice. Slaves made all of the bricks and most of the tradesmen, also, were highly skilled slaves. It is estimated that about 80% of the surviving 17th- and 18th-century buildings, and their accompanying furniture, were constructed by African-American craftsmen. Interestingly, after the day's work was completed the slaves were free to hire themselves out, even being allowed to keep a percentage of their wages. Some, indeed, saved enough money to purchase their freedom and, as such, could learn to read, own property, pay taxes (of course) and enjoy limited legal rights. So many had reached this level by a century later that, in 1860, Charles Towne's population of 40,000 included 3,237 free persons of color, 30% of whom even owned their own slaves!

A full 10 years before Patrick Henry made it famous, Christopher Gadsden, protesting against the Stamp Act in 1765, incited resistance by using the Latin phrase "Aut mors aut

Libertas," which translates as "Liberty or Death." In 1774 five prominent Charlestonians – Christopher Gadden, John and Edward Rutledge, Thomas Lynch and Henry Middleton – were named as delegates to the First Continental Congress, with the latter being chosen its president later that year. The Declaration of Independence came to Charles Towne in 1776, and was read out under the Liberty Tree close to what, today, is 80 Alexander Street. In late March of 1780 British forces laid siege to the city, which surrendered on May 12th after 40 days – thus beginning a 2½-year occupation.

In 1783, the end of the Revolutionary War saw Charles Towne incorporated and its name changed to Charleston. The conflict left commerce and trade devastated, however, primarily due to the loss of one of its staple crops, indigo. Production of this permanent blue dye had been subsidized by the British since 1742, and collapsed when the subsidy was withdrawn after the war. Three years later, on March 22nd, 1786, the General Assembly, bowing to political pressure from the more numerous settlers in the Upcountry, agreed to move the capitol to Columbia, a brand new planned town halfway between Lowcountry and Upcountry, South Carolina. In early 1791, the Assembly moved into the stunning new Capitol building there. It was in that year, too, that President George Washington spent a week in Charleston, as a part of his grand tour of the Southern States.

The development of the cotton gin and the planting of short-staple cotton brought a new cash crop and an increase in use of slave labor to the region. Industrial expansion, encouraged by the 1800 opening of the Santee Canal connecting the Santee and Cooper rivers, also boosted the economy. By this time, too, Charleston, with a population of 20,500, although small by northern standards, had risen to a position of some prominence as the most important urban center in the South. Edgar Allan Poe, then a young army recruit, was stationed at Fort Multrie on nearby Sullivan's Island in 1828-29. During this period he collected ideas for a number of his works, including **The Gold Bug**, a popular story based on Carolina pirate tales.

In 1828, in disagreements between the states, South Carolina took the lead in registering its opposition to a new agricultural

tariff by declaring the rights of states to nullify federal laws. In a foretaste of things to come, the state threatened secession from the Union in 1833, although Congress avoided such retaliation by the passage of a compromise tariff act. Nevertheless, problem after problem fueled the fires of militancy until, in November 1860, federal officials in the city resigned upon receiving the news of Lincoln's election. Shortly thereafter, on December 20th, the Convention of the People of South Carolina ratified an Ordinance of Secession, declaring the State an Independent Commonwealth. A few months later, on April 12, 1861, action replaced words as the first shots of the Civil War resounded with the shelling by Confederate forces of Fort Sumter. Devastation came quickly to Charleston, in the form of a 1½-year siege by Federal forces that began in August 1863, and ended with the advance of General Sherman's troops on the city.

Following the war, fortunes improved little as the once profitable rice crop failed to rebound. Despair was compounded when, in 1886, an earthquake – estimated to be 7.5 on the Richter Scale, caused $6 million worth of damage in the Lowcountry. What could not be foreseen at that time, was that the very poor state of the economy would prove a blessing in disguise for Charleston. Much too poor to demolish and rebuild, the citizens salvaged whatever they could, inadvertently saving through that process two centuries worth of architectural treasures. A brief respite from hardship came in the latter part of the 19th century as the cotton industry brought some measure of prosperity to the region. Sadly, the boom was short-lived, as an infestation of the boll weevil consigned that chapter of Charleston's economic expansion to history. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Naval Yard was completed, and it subsequently brought economic growth in its wake during World War I and II.

It was not long before Charleston's amazing array of architectural jewels began to attract the serious attention of tourists, and the influx of visitors that flocked to experience the history of the city created a brand new business. The implications of this phenomenon were not lost on the more astute of

Charlestonians and, in 1920, Susan Pringle Frost and others formed the Society for the Preservation of Old Dwellings, later to become the Preservation Society of Charleston. This marked the formal beginning of organized historic preservation, with the policy of urban conservation becoming, then, no longer a necessity but a choice. In 1931, the city adopted the nation's first Historical Zoning Ordinance, protecting, and thus preserving for posterity, some 400 residential properties in a 23-block area south of Broad Street.

Artists, writers, musicians and others with cultural tastes were drawn to this rather unusual ambiance, and many went on to achieve national, and in some cases international, acclaim. In the 1920s, Charleston became a household word as a dance craze bearing the city's name spread like wildfire across the nation. In 1935, on a more serious note, the Charleston Symphony Orchestra was founded. George Gershwin spent much time in Charleston researching for the first American opera, *Porgy and Bess*, and reflected in his story is the unusual cultural mix of the era and the area – where a minority European-originated elite co-existed, but very rarely mixed with, a very colorful majority of African descent. In 1957, the Italian composer Giancarlo Menotti was invited to Charleston by Countess Paolozzi, and the city subsequently became home to the composer's Festival of Two Worlds. In 1977, this festival evolved into the first **Spoleto Festival USA**, which, during its 22 subsequent seasons, has become America's premier arts festival, uniquely utilizing all aspects of the city as its stage. Indeed, more than 100,000 people attend this festival, which lasts 17 days. Since the year of its inception, tourism to Charleston has increased threefold and more than $500 million has been invested in the revitalization of the historic central district.

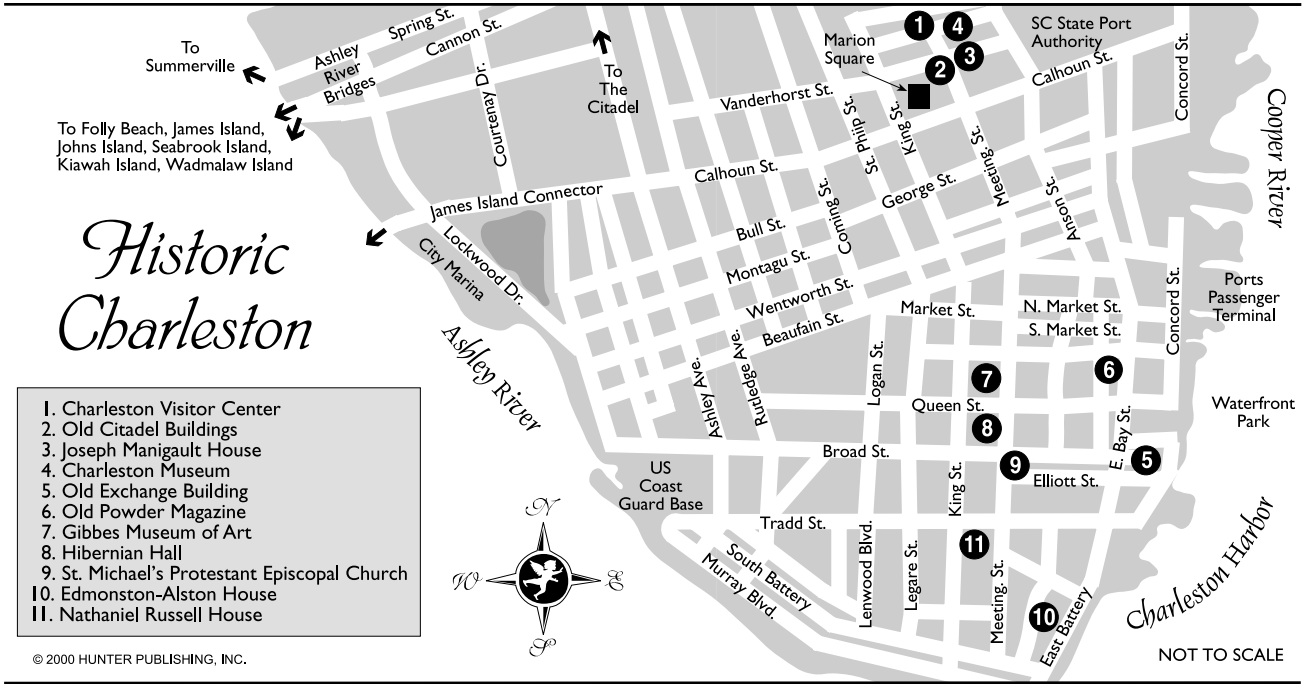
Given its long and illustrious history, it is not surprising that Charleston and vicinity have seen many American firsts. Among these are the opening, in 1700, of what was believed to be the first library; the commencement, in 1707, of the career of Henrietta Johnson, America's first recognized woman artist; the first public presentation of an opera in 1735; the organiza-

tion of the first fire insurance company; the establishment of one of the nation's first theaters, The Dock Street, in 1736; the planning and construction of America's oldest formal landscaped gardens – at Middleton Place, circa 1741; the formation, in 1749, of Congregation Beth Elohim, the oldest synagogue in continuous use; the opening of the nation's oldest museum in 1773; the formation of the first Chamber of Commerce in 1775; the design by Robert Mills, the first native-born architect, of the first fireproof building in 1822; in 1830, the inaugural run, on tracks running between Charleston and Hamburg, SC, of *The Best Friend*, the first steam locomotive to pull passengers in regular service; and, in 1864, the first sinking by a submarine (the Confederate *CSS H. L. Hunley*) of a vessel during war.

Throughout three centuries of history, Charleston, survivor of numerous wars, has also suffered a host of natural disasters. Massive fires in 1698, 1740 and 1861; the earthquake of 1886; and a succession of hurricanes in 1752, 1885, 1893, 1911 and in 1989, Hurricane Hugo, have all wrought their share of havoc on the city. Yet Charlestonians have never failed to bounce back to restore and reinvent their hallowed city. Today, visitors from around the nation and the world reap the benefits of their resiliency and determination.

Things to Do

The **Charleston Visitor Reception and Transportation Center**, ☎ 843-724-7174, 375 Meeting Street, open daily from 8:30 am to 5:30 pm between April 1st and October 31st and closing a half-hour earlier the rest of the year, is the most logical place to begin your exploration of Charleston. Here, you will find a well-trained and obliging staff and numerous brochures, maps and other guides that will help you find your way around. Strangely, although the Charleston Convention and Visitors Bureau has space here, it is not their headquarters. So, if you want information sent to you beforehand, you will need to call ☎ 800-868-8118 or check out www.charlestoncvb.comm on the Internet.


Historic Charleston
1. Charleston Visitor Center
2. Old Citadel Buildings
3. Joseph Manigault House
4. Charleston Museum
5. Old Exchange Building
6. Old Powder Magazine
7. Gibbes Museum of Art
8. Hibernian Hall
9. St. Michael's Protestant Episcopal Church
10. Edmonston-Alston House
11. Nathaniel Russell House
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To Summerville
To Folly Beach, James Island, Johns Island, Seabrook Island, Kiawah Island, Wadmalaw Island
Ashley River Bridges
Spring St.
Cannon St.
Courtenay Dr.
To The Citadel
James Island Connector
Lockwood Dr.
City Marina
Ashley River
Marion Square
SC State Port Authority
Calhoun St.
Concord St.
Cooper River
Vanderhorst St.
St. Philip St.
King St.
Meeting St.
Anson St.
Coming St.
George St.
Bull St.
Montagu St.
Wentworth St.
Beaufain St.
Market St.
N. Market St.
S. Market St.
Ports Passenger Terminal
Ashley Ave.
Rutledge Ave.
Logan St.
Queen St.
Broad St.
E. Bay St.
Waterfront Park
Elliott St.
US Coast Guard Base
Tradd St.
South Battery
Murray Blvd.
Lenwood Blvd.
Legare St.
Meeting St.
East Battery
Charleston Harbor
NOT TO SCALE
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It is easy to be overwhelmed by the sheer number of places to see and things to do in this marvelous city. We were. Let us, therefore, give you some recommendations.

As explained above, in 1920 Susan Pringle Frost and others formed the Society for the Preservation of Old Dwellings, which, in 1947, became the Preservation Society of Charleston, ☎ 843-723-1623, 40 East Bay Street. Among the first of their purchases was the **Nathaniel Russell House**, at 51 Meeting Street, acclaimed as one of the nation's best examples of the neoclassical style of architecture. Nathaniel Russell, a native Rhode Islander, founder and first president of Charleston's influential New England Society, arrived in the city in 1765 and very soon had made his fortune. Money, as we know, attracts money, and sometimes love as well, and in 1788 he married Sarah Hopton, the daughter of another prominent Charleston businessman who had also made his fortune in rice and indigo. The couple finished construction of this magnificent mansion-house, noted for elaborate plasterwork ornamentation, geometrically designed rooms and an absolutely stunning free-flying curved staircase, in 1808. It is furnished with period antiques and works of art, many of which originate from Charleston. A visit here allows its guests to see just how gracious life was for the city's elite; and to glimpse, on the flip side, the conditions under which the Russell's African-American slaves lived and worked.

Another mansion of this era, the **Aiken-Rhett House**, built by a merchant in 1818, was much expanded and redecorated in the 1830s and 1850s by Governor William Aiken Jr. and his wife. The house has remained virtually unaltered since 1858. In fact, it remained in the Aiken family until 1975. It was purchased by the foundation in 1995 and is now open to visitors. Grand in style, especially the imposing entrance hall with a double staircase and protective cast iron railings, it is furnished with many treasures that the Governor, one of South Carolina's wealthiest citizens, and his wife accumulated on their travels in Europe. In contrast, as with the Nathaniel Russell House, you will be able to see what are considered to be

America's best preserved urban slave quarters, which have remained more or less unaltered since the 1850s.

We have already touched upon **The Powder Magazine**, at 79 Cumberland Street. The only public building in either North or South Carolina remaining from the period of the Lords Proprietors, it is also owned by the Historic Charleston Foundation. The structure has served various other functions throughout its lengthy history, but has recently been restored to its mid-19thc-entury condition and opened as an historic site.

The two houses are open to the public throughout the year – with the exception of Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day – from Monday through Saturday, 10 am to 5 pm and on Sunday, 2 to 5 pm. The Powder Magazine opens only between March and October. Tickets may be purchased at any of these locations, either on an individual or collective basis.

Our Suggestion: The Charleston Heritage Federation offers the Charleston Heritage Passport, which gives a 20% discount off admission fees for the Gibbes Museum of Art, the Nathaniel Russell House, the Edmonston-Alston House, Drayton Hall and Middleton Place. So, if you plan to visit all of these, pick up your passport at the first place you visit.

The foundation also spends much time and effort preserving the architectural and cultural heritage of Charleston, which includes architectural rehabilitation and craft training. Visitors impressed with what they have seen will want to wander over to 105 Broad Street, home to the **Historic Charleston Reproductions Shop**, ☎ 843-723-8292 or fax 722-7129. Here, between the hours of 10 am and 5 pm, Monday through Saturday, you will find home furnishings, accessories and other giftware, including an array of jewelry pieces adapted from ironwork motifs in Charleston. Each of these is authorized by the foundation, and carries a product card detailing its historical significance.

The Historic Charleston Foundation, though, doesn't have a monopoly on historic buildings. The **Charleston Museum**, ☎ 843-722-2996 or fax 722-1784, 360 Meeting Street, was founded in 1773. It is the first and oldest such establishment in the United States and boasts two National Historic Landmark houses of its own. The museum proper, dedicated to preserving and interpreting the social and natural history of Charleston and South Carolina, houses many interesting displays. Not least of these is the **Charleston Silver Exhibit** that includes internationally recognized works by local artists and pieces dating from Colonial times up to the late 19th century.

The first of the museum's two houses, the **Heyward-Washington House**, was built in 1772 by Daniel Heyward, a rice planter and father to one of the South Carolinian signers of the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Heyward Jr. It earned the second half of its name in 1791, when it was rented for the use of President George Washington, a guest of the city. Today, the home is filled with traditional Charleston-made furniture dating from the 18th century, including the priceless Holmes Bookcase –considered one of the finest pieces of its kind in the nation. The Heyward-Washington House also has the distinction of being the only 18th-century house open to visitors, and retains its original kitchen buildings and carriage house.

The museum's other such property, the **Joseph Manigault House** circa 1803, is a particularly graceful example of the Adams style of architecture. Designed by wealthy Lowcountry rice planter, Gabriel Manigault, for his brother Joseph, it features a very unusual curving central staircase and an impressive collection of Charleston, American, English and French pieces from the era.

The museum is open daily, Monday through Saturday from 9 am to 5 pm and on Sunday from 1 to 5 pm. The houses are open Monday through Saturday from 10 am to 5 pm and on Sunday from 1 to 5 pm.

While still contemplating life in the early 19th century, set your course for the lower waterfront – 21 East Battery Street, where

you will find the three-story **Edmunston-Alston House**, ☎ 843-722-7171, www.middletonplace.org, which has been featured in the TV series *America's Castles*. When the highly successful Charleston merchant Charles Edmonston built this splendid late Federal-style house in 1825, it was one of the first in what is now a prestigious area. The location was convenient for his business purposes, too. From the piazza he could monitor the comings and goings of vessels carrying his goods to and from the nearby wharves. The economic depression of 1837 left Edmondson in hard times, however, and he was forced to sell his house to Charles Alston, a member of a Lowcountry rice-planting dynasty. Alston made many structural changes, including adding a third-floor piazza with Corinthian columns and a second-floor iron balcony on the east, water-facing front. The home has its share of historical connections as well. It is said that General Beauregard and others watched the bombardment of Fort Sumter from here, and that Robert E. Lee once spent the night here after a fire threatened his hotel. The Alston family used the home as their city residence for more than 80 years. In fact, they still own it and live on the third floor to this day. Public tours of the first two floors are conducted by staff of the Middleton Place Foundation, Tuesday through Saturday from 10 am to 4:30 pm and Sunday and Monday from 1:30 to 4:30 pm. Incidentally, Middleton Place should also not be missed but, as it is a little way outside of Charleston, we will describe it in further detail below (page 306).

Just over 50 years later yet another very impressive residence, the **Calhoun Mansion**, ☎ 843-722-8205, emerged at 16 Meeting Street. Built by George Walton Williams, a wealthy merchant and banker, this 24,000-square-foot house with 14-foot ceilings, a stairwell that ascends toward a 75-foot domed ceiling and a ballroom with a 45-foot-high coved glass skylight, was described by important newspapers of the day as the most complete home in the South. The home today boasts tremendous eclectic collections of Victorian furnishings and beautifully restored gardens, and has featured in movies such as *Scarlet* and *North and South*. We wondered, as you might, how the property came about its name, and the answer is very sim-

ple – Williams' daughter married Patrick Calhoun, grandson of the famous John C. Calhoun.

Visiting the houses that are open to the public is, indeed, interesting, but in Charleston there are many, many more beautiful and varied homes that remain in private hands. Curiosity makes one wonder about the elegance and history hidden from gaze beyond their walls. To get an insider's view, plan your trip to Charleston either in the spring or fall, when garden and holiday tours respectively allow a peak beyond normally closed doors.

In the spring, between mid-March and mid-April when the flowers in the city are at their most colorful, The Historic Charleston Foundation offers you, an opportunity to partake of its **Festival of Houses & Gardens**. The setting is the Historic District of Charleston, and the itinerary varies daily to provide the maximum opportunity to experience the architectural legacy of the distinctive historic houses, churches and other important public buildings. As tickets are limited, it is best to call ☎ 843-723-1623 well in advance for tickets and schedule information.

Romantic couples, though, might very well decide to visit Charleston in the fall when the **Fall Candlelight Tours of Homes and Gardens** is presented by The Preservation Society of Charleston, ☎ 843-722-4630, 800-968-8175 or fax 723-4381, 147 King Street. The tours, held every Thursday, Friday and Saturday evening, showcase over 175 unique old homes and gardens in Charleston's world-famous Historic District, with a different historic neighborhood being highlighted each night. This is a self-guided walking tour, with marshals along the route, where you can visit at your own pace eight to 10 properties, private houses, churches or other public buildings, all on the National Register of Historic Places. These usually take place between the middle of September and the middle of October. In1999, the 23rd consecutive year of the tours, tickets cost just $30 per person. So well recognized are these tours that they were selected as one of the Southeast Tourism Society's "Top 20 Events for the month of September, 1998." A recent innovation, also, are two Sunday afternoon **Garden & Tea**

Tours. Be reminded, though, that high-heeled shoes are not allowed, that absolutely no smoking, eating or drinking is allowed in the homes, that neither photography nor video taping is permitted and that bathrooms are not readily available on the tours. Flashlights are useful during evening walks.

If you can't plan your trip at those times, then we suggest you contact the **House Tour**, ☎ 843-849-7660. Departing from the Mills House Hotel on Monday through Saturday at 9:30 am, this 2½-hour tour, costing $25 per person, meanders through the historic part of Charleston giving a glimpse of its spirit and past. You will, also, have the opportunity to visit the gracious interiors of two private homes and, afterwards, partake of refreshments in one of those seductive walled courtyard gardens.

As you might expect, there are numerous companies and individuals offering walking tours around Charleston. Most of these are narrow in scope, concentrating on one subject or theme of their choice. That is not the case, however, with **The Original Charleston Walks**, ☎ 843-577-3800, 800-729-3420, fax 853-6899, e-mail info@charlestonwalks.com, or www.charlestonwalks.com. They are at 334 East Bay Street and they advertise that they have "the Best Tours in Charleston's History." No matter your area of interest, whether it is exploring a particular time in Charleston's history, the Civil War, Slavery and Freedom, Ghosts or even Murder and Mysteries, The Original Charleston Walks has a thematic tour for you. These depart from the Broad Street Gate entrance to Washington Park, located at 78 Broad Street beside the City Hall, and cost $12 per person. If you prefer a private tour, either at one of the scheduled times or at another time, then that can be arranged at a fee of $60. If you want to customize a walk, the company will be happy to arrange that for you as well. Finally, if your interest was piqued by our earlier discussion of the Heyward-Washington House and the Edmonston-Alston House, you should opt for the Historic Homes Walk. Held on Tuesday through Saturday at 10 am, and costing $22 per person (which includes entrance fees), it meanders through the fascinating neighborhood south of Broad Street and visits these two mansions.

Visitors to Charleston will soon ascertain that horse-drawn carriage tours are very popular here and, indeed, they offer a relaxed and romantic way of seeing this enchanting city. There is little difference between the various companies. We suggest you select from either the **Old South Carriage Co.**, ☎ 843-723-9712, 14 Anson Street, whose guides can be easily identified by their red sash and Confederate uniforms, or the **Charleston Carriage Co.**, ☎ 843-723-TOUR or 577-0042, 14 Hayne Street. Both companies operate tours throughout the day that last around an hour and, if you are so inclined, you can visit their barns to get acquainted with the horses.

It is nearly impossible to visit Charleston without being enticed to venture out onto the waters that surround it. As an added attraction, historic Fort Sumter is found in the harbor. In response to both, **Fort Sumter Tours Inc.**, ☎ 843-722-1691, 205 King Street, has put together three tours, designed to appeal to a range of tastes, that set to sea from the City Marina on Lockwood Boulevard. The Fort Sumter Tour takes you across the bay to this National Monument and is the only tour that actually makes a stop there. At the fort, National Park Service Rangers are on hand to answer your questions as you explore the fort where the Civil War began and visit the museum. The Charleston Harbor Tour, on the other hand, offers a waterside view of Charleston. This gives a really different perspective of the city, and the narration is particularly informative. Our favorite, though, and infinitely more romantic, is the Dinner & Harbor Cruise. If you are blessed with a fine day, select a table on the outdoor deck of the 102-foot yacht (perhaps enhanced by a dozen roses sent ahead by a thoughtful lover) and settle back for a three-hour cruise, which includes a four-course dinner. Add live music and dancing and the unparalleled backdrop of Historic Charleston to the equation and you have the recipe for an unforgettably romantic ambiance.

The sight of a sailing ship, especially one with tall masts, will likely evoke fantasies of adventure and romance. While in Charleston, you can experience this for yourself on a two-hour Afternoon Cruise or Sunset Cruise aboard the 84-foot, three-masted gaff-rigged topsail schooner ***Pride***, ☎ 843-559-9686 or

888-571-2486, www.schoonerpride.com. This Class "C" Tall Ship, modeled to resemble the old coastal trading schooners, sets sail from the City Marina at Lockwood Drive every day from March 1st to the end of November. Either cruise, and each one is different because she sails with the winds and tides, costs $17 per person. If you are so inclined, you may assist in raising and trimming the sails, or even take a turn at the wheel. Remember to take your camera.

Some of you, doubtless, will prefer speed to the gracefulness of sail and, if so, we recommend you head across the Cooper River to Patriot's Point. There, between April 1st and the end of the summer season, you will find the 72-foot speedboat ***Sea Thunder***, ☎ 843-881-3367, 22 Patriots Point Road, Mount Pleasant, which offers Charleston's most thrilling cruise. Skipping from wave top to wave top, with the power of the twin turbocharged V-12 diesel engines throbbing beneath you, the 90-minute tour takes you past Naval warships and aircraft at Patriot's Point. You will then pass alongside Charleston's waterside Battery, out past Fort Sumter, and along the Intercoastal Waterway to the shoreline of Sullivan's Island and the Isle of Palms. Wear bathing suits if you like, or raincoats are available to protect you from the spray.

To get in sync with the latest angling trends, inshore light tackle and fly-fishing, contact **Captain Richard Stuhr**, ☎ 843-881-3179, at 547 Sanders Farm Lane, Charleston, SC 29492. As a native of the area and an Orvis-endorsed guide, he has life-long experience of the waters in and around the Lowcountry. Tours aboard his fully equipped 18-foot boat are priced at $250 for a half-day, $300 for three-quarters of a day or $350 for a full day. Prices quoted are for either one or two people and include fuel, bait, ice and tackle. Depending upon the season, you may come across Spanish mackerel, bluefish, ladyfish, crevalle jacks, sea trout, red drum, sheepshead and flounder. Captain Stuhr will also give, if you need it, casting instruction for $50 per hour.

If you haven't brought your own gear, or want to expand on what you have, head for **The Charleston Angler**, ☎ 843-571-3899, fax 571-4958, toll-free 877-611-5374 or

www.charlestonangler.com. It's at 946 Orleans Road, A-5, in the West Ashley Shops across from Citadel Mall. Owners Brad Harvey and Rick Hess specialize in fly-fishing and light tackle, and carry a wide array of rods, reels, accessories, and attractive sports clothes. Don't neglect their friendly dog – the one that stars on the website!

If traditional fishing is on your itinerary, make a stop at **John's Rod & Reel**, ☎ 843-766-7300, 47 South Windemere Boulevard. In addition to a huge selection of new merchandise – rods, reels and other gear – it is the largest reel repair shop in the region. Look also for an eclectic array of other goods, including clothing and boots, hammocks, wind chimes, decoys, model boats, brass lamplights, clocks, books and framed pictures. To cook your catch, there are cast-iron pots, BBQ sets and all kinds of spices. Overseeing the goings on are numerous beautifully preserved fish.

Before you become waterlogged, perhaps you would enjoy a different perspective. Operating out of an airport just 11 miles from the city center and reached by traveling I-26 west to Exit 211A, **Flying High Over Charleston**, ☎ 843-569-6148, offers the opportunity to do just that. Although they schedule many types of flights, we would recommend the Historic Charleston and Sea Islands Tour, priced at $135 a couple. This gives a bird's-eye view of historic downtown Charleston, Fort Sumter, Charleston Harbor and the aircraft carrier *USS Yorktown*, the Morris Island Lighthouse, three or four local plantations and over 40 miles of coastline.

By this time, no visitor to Charleston can have missed the sight of the massive aircraft carrier *Yorktown*, World War II's famous "Fighting Lady," docked at Patriot's Point across the Cooper River from the city. What many might not know, however, is that the carrier is just one among many attractions at the **Patriot's Point Naval & Maritime Museum**, ☎ 843-884-2727, 40 Patriot's Point Road, the world's largest museum of its kind. The ***USS Yorktown*** is massively impressive, and she has a history of distinguished service. Following her commission on April 15, 1943, she took part in many World War II Pacific naval battles and patrolled the western Pacific during the Cold

and Vietnam wars. A more peaceful mission was the recovery of the crew of Apollo 8, the first manned spacecraft to circle the moon. These days, at rest in Charleston, you can visit many crucial areas, inspect the planes that once flew from her decks and, in the ship's theater, watch an Academy Award-winning film about the *Yorktown*.

Two additional surface vessels, the destroyer ***Laffey*** and the Coast Guard cutter ***Ingham***, may offer a lower silhouette, but they are no less illustrious. The former, commissioned on February 8, 1944, took part in the D-Day landings a few months later, and was then transferred to the Pacific where, off Okinawa on April 16, 1945, she suffered from a Japanese kamikaze attack. The *Laffey* also served in the Korean War, being decommissioned in 1975 after service in the Atlantic Fleet. The oldest of the vessels on display here and one of the most decorated US vessels, the *Ingham* entered service in 1936 and, in a career that spanned over 50 years, earned 18 ribbon. In 1942, on one of her 31 World War II convoys, she sank the German U-boat 626; after that she served both in the Pacific theater and in Vietnam before, in more recent years, tracking illegal boat immigrants and drug runners.

The last of the vessels open to visitors is the submarine ***Clamagore***, which began her 30-year career in 1945, toward the end of World War II. Space here is cramped indeed, and not very suitable for those who suffer from claustrophobia or have health problems. Perhaps you will be lucky, as we were, to visit on a day when a group of ex-sailors who served on the *Clamagore* turned up. Their stories and memories certainly gave fascinating insight to what life was like on board a submarine.

Two other exhibits deserve attention also. The **Vietnam Naval Support Base** is a true-to-scale model showing the living conditions and operational areas utilized by Vietnam support base veterans. And, the nation's most gallant fighting heroes are celebrated in the **National Congressional Medal of Honor Museum**, where medals and a variety of memorabilia relating to each award are on display. Between April 1st and

September 30th the museum is open from 9 am to 6 pm. It closes one hour earlier the rest of the year.

Looking farther afield we recommend three places, different in character, for excursions outside of Charleston. Following Highway 61, Ashley River Road, 14 miles northwest of Charleston you will come to **Middleton Place**, ☎ 843-556-6020 or 800-782-3608. This 18th-century plantation was the home of Henry Middleton, president of the First Continental Congress, and his son, Arthur, a signatory to the Declaration of Independence. The house you see today was constructed in 1755 as a gentlemen's guest wing, but became the family home after the plantation was put to the torch during the Civil War. Also of interest are the Plantation Stableyards, where artisans recreate the activities of a self-sustaining Lowcountry plantation, and numerous farm animals enliven the agricultural displays. Middleton Place is best known, though, for it lovely landscaped gardens – the nation's oldest, created some 250 years ago. Reflecting the symmetry of 17th-century European design, the lawns, shaded by ancient trees, cascade toward the river and flower banks are alive with colorful plantings throughout the year. Middleton Place is open daily from 9 am to 5 pm and its restaurant, serving delicious Lowcountry specialties, opens for lunch and dinner on weekends.

America's most photographed plantation, **Boone Hall Plantation**, ☎ 843-884-4371, may be found just six miles north of Charleston, on Route 17. Major John Boone, a member of the First Fleet of Settlers, who arrived in 1681, received this plantation, which once covered more than 17,000 acres, as a grant from the Lords Proprietors. The present mansion dates from 1935, although it was constructed along the lines of the original house, which was built around 1750. Of particular interest here is one of the few Slave Streets remaining intact in the United States. It is comprised of nine original brick cabins, built around 1743, all listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The main attraction here, though, is the world-famous half-mile Avenue of Oaks, draped by Spanish moss, which is itself on the National Register of Historic Places. It is thought that the first oak was planted in 1743 by Captain

Thomas Boone, and the oaks have been featured, as have the mansion and slave quarters, in numerous movies and TV shows – most notably, the ABC miniseries *North and South.* These days, the Boone Hall Plantation, along with its 738 acres, is open for tours in the summer months Monday through Saturday from 8:30 am to 6:30 pm and on Sunday from 1 to 5 pm, with slightly shorter hours throughout the rest of the year.

Just south of Charleston, at 3688 Angel Oak Road, Johns Island, is an amazing tree that some believe is over 1,400 years old. This cannot be substantiated, however, as the heart of an oak tree often rots, thus making core samples unusable. The **Angel Oak**, ☎ 843-559-3496, is a live oak of the variety *Quercus Virginiana*, once highly favored for shipbuilding, rather common throughout the Lowcountry, and particularly suited to the sea islands. Only in the very oldest trees do the huge limbs rest on the ground, as is the case here. This mammoth tree is 65 feet high with a circumference of 25½ feet; i shades an area of 17,000 square feet. Its largest limb is 89 feet long and 11¼ feet around. The tree is owned by the City of Charleston and may be visited daily between the hours of 9 am and 5 pm.

Sweet Dreams

Charleston Place, ☎ 843-724-8410, fax 722-6952, www.charlestonplace.com, 130 Market Street, owned by Orient-Express Hotels, Inc., is considered to be the finest hotel in the city. It is the proud recipient of both the AAA Four-Diamond and Mobil Four-Star Awards and was ranked among the "Top 10 Hotels in North America" by *Condé Nast Traveler* in 1997. Located in the heart of Charleston's Historic District, it is known for its Italian marbled lobby with a grand, curved double staircase and a magnificent 12-foot crystal chandelier, comprised of more than 3,000 individual pieces and handmade in Murano, Italy. The list of royalty, politicians, actors, actresses, musicians and other celebrities that have stayed here is lengthy and impressive, and includes President Clinton,

Prince Charles, the Emperor of Japan, Colin Powell, Burt Lancaster, Oprah Winfrey, Kevin Costner and the New York Knicks.

Each of the hotel's 440 guest rooms, including the 42 suites, is sumptuously furnished with period pieces and Southern-style armories. Each also features an opulent bath with Bottecino marble and brass fixtures, separate work space and seating areas, temperature control, ceiling fans, cable TV and direct dial telephone with voice messaging and dataport capabilities. The most discerning of you will specifically request one of the 79 guest rooms on The Club Floor, actually comprised of the top two floors, where a long-stemmed rose will be awaiting you. These offer more intimacy and personalized service, use of a private elevator, eighth floor lounge service, and personal concierge and room attendants. Guests of The Club also enjoy a wide array of culinary freebies, including Continental breakfast, Charleston Tea in the afternoon, evening receptions with an open bar and hors d'oeuvres, and a dessert buffet with after-dinner drinks. Rounding out the perks are special check-in and departure privileges, 24-hour room service, and same day or overnight valet, laundry and shoeshine. In 1999, rates per couple per night were $360 for a Deluxe guest room, which increased to $385 on the Executive Level and $395 for The Club. Suites ranged from $475 to $2,500.

Charleston Place offers a wide selection of special packages and we would like to recommend the following ones. The Charleston Romance Package will give you a horse-drawn carriage ride for two, chilled champagne and complimentary rose on arrival, exclusively designed Crabtree & Evelyn bath amenities and the hotel's signature chocolate dessert – an exquisite white chocolate conch shell, surrounded by a cornucopia of chocolate truffles and chocolate-dipped strawberries. The gastronomes among you will be attracted by the Charleston Gourmet Package. It includes dinner for two in Chef Bob Waggoner's highly rated Charleston Grill Restaurant, a Lowcountry breakfast daily, and Afternoon Tea-for-Two in the hotel's Lobby Lounge. Each of the above packages is $395 in a Deluxe guest room and $550 for guests of The Club, per night.

One of the newest additions to Charleston Place is **The Spa at Charleston Place,** which offers a selection of classic European beauty and therapeutic services. Expect to find, also, a spectacular indoor/outdoor heated pool, a Jacuzzi in the signature clock tower with a stellar view, a fully equipped fitness center, steam room and sauna, a lighted tennis court, and an outdoor garden area for sunbathing. Treatments here – massage, skin care, body treatments, pedicure or manicure – can be booked on either an individual basis or as part of one of four Day Spa Packages lasting between two and two hours. Even more enticing are three carefully created comprehensive Spa Packages, inclusive of accommodation, created by Charleston Place. Package I, *It's a Wrap*, features a facial, pedicure, manicure, a wrap of choice – including an Energy Balancing Wrap, a Detoxifying Body Wrap or a Stimulating Circulating Wrap and a healthy Spa lunch. Package II, *The Rejuvenation Express*, is for those who opt to revitalize their tired skin and muscles – after a long stretch sightseeing, maybe? It includes a stimulating one-hour massage and a Personal Prescription Facial. Package III, *The Invigorating Escape*, the most pampering and enticing of the three packages, allows three treatments of your choice from the Spa's extensive menu. The prices for these, respectively, are: with Deluxe accommodations, $549, $395 and $529; and, with Club accommodations, $649, $540 and $629. Rates include double-occupancy, but only single treatments in The Spa. For Packages I and II, you can share the services between you, and the one not taking a treatment can use the other facilities in the spa.

You don't have to venture out of Charleston Place for fine dining, either. The Charleston Grill, the main culinary attraction, is detailed under *Tables for Two*. The Palmetto Café, the hotel's second popular dining room, set within a pretty garden built around a central fountain, is open for a bountiful buffet breakfast, lunch, dinner and a Sunday brunch featuring fresh seafood. Few guests will wish to miss, either, the famous Charleston Place Afternoon Tea, served in the Lobby Lounge. In fact, you have a choice of two. Option #1 is the Classic Charleston Tea, with a properly brewed pot of your favorite tea,

an assortment of classic Charleston tea sandwiches, scones – with jams, cream and lemon curd, fresh cakes, tarts, and tea cookies. The price is $11.50 for just one, but if you are sharing a romantic tea-for-two it is reduced to $6.50 each. Option #2, the South of Broad Tea, is a bit higher at $16.50 per person, but also gives open-faced tea sandwiches of smoked salmon and caviar, and the added luxury of a glass of champagne, sherry or Madeira. Be advised that applicable taxes and a 17% gratuity will be added to your bill. Later, also in the Lobby Lounge, a sumptuous array of hors d'oeuvres, cocktails and desserts are served to the accompaniment of a grand piano.

The Shops at Charleston Place offer guests an array of luxury goods from such famous retail outlets as Gucci, Laura Ashley, Godiva, Crabtree & Evelyn and Benneton, to name a few.

The **Mills House Hotel**, ☎ 843-577-2400, 800-874-9600, fax 722-2112, www.millshouse.com, 115 Meeting Street, is Charleston's original antebellum hotel. Originally owned by Francis St. Mary, she used her private home, under the name of The St. Mary Hotel, to welcome guests as early as 1801. Later in that century, an entrepreneur, Mr. Otis Mills, purchased the property and, from 1836 to 1846, leased it to the US Government for use as a courthouse. His original dream, though, had been to construct a prestigious hotel on the site and, after making renovations and additions to the property in 1846, he opened The Mansion Hotel, later known as The Mansion House. Mills still was not satisfied, however. He commissioned architect John Earle to completely redesign the property, with major structural changes including the addition of two stories and several wings. Both the interior and the exterior design were magnificent. Elaborate ceiling moldings, marble mantels, mahogany stair rails and a grand marble staircase enhanced the interior, while a balcony made by the finest Philadelphia ironworks and a grand entrance of arches and columns graced the exterior. No expense was spared either in ensuring the physical comfort of its patrons.

The new hotel was the first structure in Charleston to have both running water and steam heat in the public rooms, and guest rooms were equipped with coal grates. Opened in 1853,

and termed the "finest hotel south of New York City," The Mills House, finally deemed worthy of the family name, was valued at an astonishing $200,000. Its glory, sadly, shone for a very short eight years. In a foreshadowing of tragedies to come, a guest by the name of Robert E. Lee watched from the famous iron balcony as the Great Fire of Charleston swept through the town in 1861. While the hotel was saved, like the rest of the grandes dames in the South, it suffered from the economic depression that followed the Civil War. Despite the continual decline, however, it retained its prestige. President Theodore Roosevelt stayed at the hotel, in the same room given Robert E. Lee almost 50 years earlier, when he visited Charleston in 1901 to attend the South Carolina Interstate and West Indian Exposition. When ownership changed hands early in the 20th century, the name was changed to the St. John's Hotel but deterioration continued apace until what was once considered the South's most elegant hotel was considered little more than an eyesore.

In 1967 a vacationing New York banker became enchanted with Charleston, subsequently purchasing a home on The Battery. With entrepreneurial insight, this gentleman very shortly came to the conclusion that there was not a truly elegant hotel in the historic downtown district. Contemporaneously, the old Mills House was for sale, at a price of $135,000 – which was less than it had been worth over a century before. Forming Charleston Associates to oversee the project, he set out to purchase the property, planning to invest a further half-million dollars to restore its splendor. Preliminary investigations revealed that the structure was not sound, however, and so an agreement was made to dismantle the building and, in its place, to reconstruct an exact replica. Throughout this arduous process, meticulous attention was paid to detail. The original terra cotta pediments were replicated, but in long-lasting fiberglass; the famous iron balcony was salvaged and other copies made for the Queen Street facing side; and plaster artisans, who had been trained in such 18th-century skills, duplicated ceiling, chandelier and archway moldings. Flagstones from a 1790 Charleston street, were used for the walkway around the

hotel. To grace the interior in proper fashion, over $250,000 of period antiques were purchased. Upon completion, The Mills House in its newfound antebellum splendor, was featured in the epic mini-series *The North and South*, Parts 1 and 2, has played host to such prominent celebrities as President Gerald Ford, Elizabeth Taylor and Princess Caroline.

The AAA Four-Diamond and Mobil Four-Star-recognized Mills House has 214 luxurious guest rooms and 19 suites, each individually furnished with fine period pieces and demi-canopied beds. Modern amenities include TV, climate control, voice mail, data port, nightly turndown service, and a complimentary newspaper outside your door each morning. Extra niceties include complimentary Continental breakfast and evening hors d'oeuvres available on the Executive Level. Rates vary seasonally, but range, generally, between $189 and $279 for a room and between $249 and $650 for a suite, with a $40 to $60 premium added for the Executive Level. The Romantic Get-Away Package, an extremely good value indeed, gives two nights' deluxe accommodations, a breakfast buffet for two in the Barbadoes Room Restaurant, and a horse-drawn carriage ride for two through Charleston's romantically historic streets. The cost for this, again varying according to the season, is between $336 and $576, with extra nights available at less than half those rates.

You can dine very well (and intimately) at the on-site Mills House Hotel restaurant, the Barbadoes Room, which is featured in the *Tables for Two* section, and two charming lounges offer an opportunity for refreshment and relaxation. The First Shot Lounge, so named for obvious reasons, adjoins the Barbadoes Room, and overlooks the fountain courtyard on the other side. The Best Friend Bar, named after the nation's first steam locomotive which was based in Charleston, displays an interesting collection of railroad artifacts. Guests will also enjoy The Mills House's pool and sundeck, a rarity in this city, which offers picturesque views over historic Charleston.

The **Westin Francis Marion Hotel**, ☎ 843-722-0600, 800-433-3733 or fax 723-4633, 387 King Street, on the corner of King and Calhoun Streets by Marion Square, is the grande

dame of Charleston's hotels. When it opened in 1924 it was fashioned in the gracious European manner and, with 312 rooms, was the largest hotel in the Carolinas. Its name is derived from General Francis Marion, otherwise known as the "Swamp Fox," South Carolina's principal hero of the Revolutionary War. By the end of the 1980s, as with many of its genre, it had fallen on hard times and, sadly, closed its doors. Thankfully, help was soon at hand. Six years later, in 1995, new owners began a $12 million restoration, retaining wherever possible original fixtures and fittings, but adding all modern facilities. The result: a grand and gracious hotel, reminiscent of an opulent lifestyle in a more genteel era. Guests today may choose between 226 well appointed rooms, including 66 suites, which offer a high degree of comfort. And, as the 12-story hotel (by Charleston standards, at least) is a high rise, many rooms afford majestic vistas over the city's rooftops and the busy harbor. Rates are seasonal, but expect to pay between $119 to $199 a night. Look, also, for a new on-site restaurant, Elliott's on the Square, and the Spa Adagio, on the lower level. Parking is in the adjacent public, high-rise parking lot.

The **Sheraton Charleston Hotel**, ☎ 843-723-3000, 800-968-3569, fax 720-0844, e-mail info@sheratonchs.com, www.sheratonchs.com, 170 Lockwood Drive, is a high rise hotel just a short distance from the historical center. The 333 well-appointed rooms and suites, many with floor to ceiling windows, offer majestic views over both the city and the Ashley River across the road. Those wanting that extra touch of luxury, though, will choose to pay the little extra for accommodations on the elegant Club Level. Public amenities include the popular Ashley's Restaurant, a cooling outdoor pool and plenty of free parking. Again, seasonal changes make for varying rates, but expect to pay between $129 and $179 per night.

The **Charleston Vendue Inn**, ☎ 843-577-7970, 800-845-7900, fax 577-2913, www.charleston.net/com/vendueinn, 19 Vendue Range, prides itself on European- style service, and is certainly a place to go if you want to be pampered. It is also Historic Charleston's only water-view Inn. Take your choice of an Inn Room with queen-sized bed; an Executive Suite with king-

sized bed, parlor and stocked refrigerator; a Junior Suite with king-sized bed, operational fireplace, marble bathroom with Jacuzzi, separate shower and either harbor or city view; or a Deluxe Suite with king-sized bed, operational fireplace, stocked refrigerator in the spacious parlor, complimentary fresh fruit and sherry, and marble bathroom with Jacuzzi and separate shower. All of the 45 rooms and suites are decorated with beautiful 18th-century-style furnishings and other authentic antiques, and they feature such modern amenities as telephones, computer/fax lines, cable TV, VCR and air-conditioning. The Vendue Inn has two seasons: "In Season," which includes times between March and early June, late September through November, and all holidays and special events, or "Off Season," which incorporates all other times. Rates for the former range from $150 to $235 and for the latter from $125 to $220.

This nearly 200-year-old former warehouse has many other attributes to attract you. The Garden Room, with proliferating plants, is a wonderful place to relax and, several nights a week, offers live chamber music. It is also the site of complimentary afternoon wine and cheese gatherings. The Library at Vendue, the inn's intimate restaurant, is known throughout Charleston and beyond. And who could resist sipping a mint julep and enjoying tasty appetizers at the rooftop bar – where, from four stories up, you get one of the best, if not the best, views over this charming city and Fort Sumter. There is even a modern exercise facility. Before retiring to imported chocolates waiting on your pillow, you can choose some romantic reading from the library or sip a cordial in the lobby.

The **Fulton Lane Inn**, ☎ 843-720-2600, 800-720-2688 or fax 720-2940, 202 King Street, was commissioned by the Confederate blockade-runner John Rugheimer. The ambiance is romantic and intimate. Surrounded by the comfort and grace of a bygone era are a combination of Deluxe, King, Deluxe King and Cathedral suites, many of which have a large whirlpool bath, luxurious canopied bed and wet bar, and some of which have a fireplace. Expect service that pampers: complimentary breakfast delivered to your room on a silver tray, wine and sherry in

the lobby each evening and turndown service with delicious chocolates. Conveniently, there is off-street parking – something not so common in Charleston. The rates here are governed by a complicated seasonal structure – three low and three high, which alternate through the year – and the variety of room classifications. When we were there recently, the lowest you could expect to pay was $120, and the highest $265.

Our Suggestion: Inquire about the Discover Charleston package, usually available during the first two low seasons. A rate of $285 to $475 per couple gives three days and two nights' accommodation, a Continental breakfast, a carriage ride around Charleston and a choice between a tour of Middleton Place or a boat trip to, and guided tour of, Fort Sumter.

The **Two Meeting Street Inn**, ☎ 843-723-7322, 2 Meeting Street at The Battery, Charleston's oldest and most elegant inn, has its very roots in romance. It was given, as a wedding present, by a bride's rather generous father upon its completion in 1892. Established as an inn in 1931, it exudes a wonderfully traditional Charlestonian ambiance and is embellished with intricately carved oak paneling, family antiques, oriental rugs, heirlooms, and exquisite Tiffany stained-glass windows throughout. It has nine luxurious guest rooms, each with private bath, and six designed as Grand Victorian Rooms, featuring 12-foot ceilings and canopy beds. A delicious Continental breakfast and afternoon tea, both hosted by the Spell family, are served either in the Victorian Dining Room, found on the beautifully arched piazza with a panoramic view of the Historic Battery and waterfront, or in the Southern Courtyard. Rates vary from $160 to $180 for the smaller rooms and $230 to $270 for our favorites, the Grand Victorian Rooms. There is a minimum of two nights on weekends and three on holidays and credit cards are not accepted. The Two Meeting Street Inn is very popular, and reservations should be made many months ahead of your expected visit.

The **Market Street Inn**, ☎ 843-723-2177, fax 723-8847, e-mail, or www.marketinn.com, 48 North Market Street, has a wonderful location overlooking the historic market. This is an inn with a difference in Charleston. The ambiance, however, is far from typically Charlestonian. While most B&Bs emphasize their historical connections, the innkeepers here, Michelle and Tom Loeber, have finished off the Market Street Inn in English Art Deco. There is a choice among five oversized guest rooms, all eclectically decorated with pieces from both past and present, and each having private bath, TV, telephone, ceiling fan and sitting area. Room rates range from $89 to $185, depending upon the season, with the high season being from the second week of February to the end of June and again from mid-September to the second week in November. Rates are also slightly higher on special event weekends. A glass of wine or freshly squeezed lemonade awaits upon check-in, and complimentary turndown service greets you when you retire for the evening. The following morning a complimentary breakfast is served on the patio, in the parlor, or in the privacy of your room.

Zero Water Street, ☎ 843-723-2841, fax 723-0433, www.owaterstreet.com, 31 East Battery, is the only B&B located on Charleston's Battery. Built in 1836, it has been owned by the same family since the early 1900s, opening as a bed & breakfast as recently as April 1995. There are just two suites here. The third-floor suite is comprised of a drawing room, bedroom with a queen-sized bed, kitchen with washer and dryer, sitting room and private bath. The second-floor suite has two bedrooms – one with a queen-sized bed and the other with twin beds, private bath and breakfast room. Each is elegantly furnished with antiques and family heirlooms, and has a private entrance, 12-foot ceilings, ceiling fans, air conditioning, telephone, cable TV and a private piazza with rocking chairs, a hammock, and a water view.

Surprisingly, rates here are not dictated by season; the rate is a flat $195 for the upper suite. The lower suite is rented at $135 for a couple using one bedroom or at $215 when both bedrooms are used. Expect off-street parking, Continental breakfast, and romantic touches such as fresh-cut flowers. A two-day mini-

mum stay is required on weekends and no credit cards are accepted. Because of its prestigious location and limited number of rooms, it is advisable to make an early reservation.

The **Elliott House Inn**, ☎ 843-723-1855, 800-729-1855, www.elliotthouse.com, 78 Queen Street, was built as a private residence in 1861. Through whatever adversity – hurricane, earthquake, tornado or Civil War – it has always been restored with painstaking care to ensure its architectural and historical authenticity. There are 26 guest rooms, beautifully appointed with elegant period-style furniture, a king-sized or queen-sized canopied bed, Oriental rugs, freshly cut flowers and the expected modern amenities. King-sized bedrooms are $150 a night in the high season and $105 in the low season, and queen-sized bedrooms are $125 and $94, respectively. Breakfast, if you so desire, is served in your room on a silver service – with the morning paper of course, and chocolate is delivered with turndown. Complimentary wine and cheese and iced tea are served in the courtyard where, amid the fragrance of wisteria and semitropical plants, the two of you can relax in the heated Jacuzzi tub. When you want to get out and around, leave your car behind in favor of a couple of the bicycles and a picnic basket that will be prepared especially for you.

Tables for Two

The **Charleston Grill**, ☎ 843-577-4522, 224 King Street, is the premier restaurant in the Charleston Place Hotel. Under the guidance of Chef Bob Waggoner, it has garnered AAA Four-Diamond and DiRoNA (Distinguished Restaurants of North America) awards and is the only restaurant in South Carolina to earn Mobil Four-Star recognition. The atmosphere is one of casual elegance. The warmth of paneled walls and herringbone floors and the comfort of softly padded carver chairs are accented by local folk art and accompanied by live jazz. Outdoors, an enclosed courtyard provides a very romantic ambiance for fine dining on balmy, Southern nights. The contemporary Lowcountry cuisine features fresh local produce, seafood and game, prepared with a French flair and with an emphasis on

quality ingredients and unique presentations. Appetizers include Pan Seared Foie Gras and Duck Confit, over tomato-apple chutney and pomegranate molasses ($11.95) and Sautéed Escargot over Truffled Grits, with fresh wild mushrooms and fried parsley ($8.25). Entrées might be Fresh Elk Tenderloin over Braised Apples, in a coastal huckleberry reduction ($29); or Seared Pheasant Breast with Black Trumpet Whipped Potatoes, in a walnut biscuit with a truffle-infused jus ($19.50). The 240-label wine list is based on a core selection of the finest domestic and French wines. Domestics are focused on single-vineyard, estate-grown, limited production wines from California, Oregon and Washington. French bottles include vintages from the finest chateaux of Bordeaux, leading negociants and smaller estate producers in Burgundy, and the best selections from the Alsace, Loire and Rhone Valleys. The Charleston Grill is open for dinner, Sunday through Thursday, 6 to 10 pm and Friday and Saturday from 6 to 11 pm, with the bar being open daily from 4 pm to midnight.

The **Barbadoes Room**, ☎ 843-577-2400 or fax 722-2112, is found in The Mills House Hotel. Its name is reminiscent of the very lucrative trading relationship between Charleston and the West Indies during the 18th century. Here, in an especially warm and intimate ambiance, the specialty is Lowcountry cuisine. Expect such interesting appetizers as: Scallops Ceviche, scallops, tomatoes and onions with sweet and hot peppers marinated in lime juice and served in a tortilla shell ($6.95); or Shrimp Gazpacho, a spicy chilled tomato based soup with creek shrimp, cucumbers, sweet bell peppers and onions and topped with sour cream and croutons ($4.50). Under the "Pizza, Pasta and Grits" section of the menu look for: Curried Scallops, bay scallops in a spicy, red curry sauce served with spinach linguini ($13.95), or Grilled Vegetables and Pasta, grilled slices of zucchini, yellow squash and assorted vegetables served with tomato basil penne pasta and a shiitake cream sauce ($12.95). Tempting entrées could be: Fried Oysters and Shrimp lightly fried in an herb breading and served with aioli and spicy cocktail dip, or Lowcountry Chicken Meuniere, sautéed boneless

breast of chicken topped with pecans, grapes and browned butter served over creamy stoneground grits, (each $15.95).

The **Stono Café**, ☎ 843-762-4478, 1956 Maybank Highway, James Island, about eight minutes from downtown Charleston, merits a venture out of the city proper. We were introduced to the restaurant via some very attractive promotional materials. Upon making inquiries around town, we heard only rave reviews and decided to investigate first-hand. Chef Barry Waldrop's menu features Lowcountry cuisine, based on fresh seafood, pastas, vegetarian dishes and house specials cooked in an open kitchen. The wait staff is attentive and the atmosphere is casual. Appetizers may include Sautéed Oysters "Stono" with Lemon Beurre Blanc, served on baguette croutons, and Cajun Chicken Livers, mildly spiced in cream sauce (each at $6.95); or shrimp and artichoke hearts, in a Parmesan cream sauce ($5.95). Entrées might include Shrimp and Grits, in Canadian Bacon cream sauce ($15.95); Scallops and Crawfish, in puff pastry ($16.95); or Pasta Leda-Louise Marinated Chicken Breast with shallots, over angel hair pasta ($14.95). Wines are chosen to complement the dishes, and other drinks are available from the full service bar. The Stono Café is open for lunch, Tuesday through Saturday, from 11 am to 2:30 pm; and for dinner, Monday through Thursday, from 5:30 to 10 pm, and Friday and Saturday from 5:30 to 11 pm. Sunday brunch is served from 10 am to 3 pm.

Meritäge, ☎ 843-723-8181 or fax 723-8138, 235 East Bay Street, serves up a new, exciting and very lively concept in dining and entertainment. Building upon the Spanish tapas (small plate) theme, it includes samplings with Continental American, Southern, Mediterranean, Caribbean, Thai and other Asian influences. The ambiance, too, reflects many influences. You pass through iron gates into a front patio complete with water fountain, hammock and a blooming jasmine plant. The interior, painted salmon and dark green, is open plan with some alcoves, and the art, with many pieces available for sale, has been created by local artists. There is entertainment, too: a solo guitar act on Thursdays, live blues and jazz bands on the weekends and a solo act on the deck each Sunday. At other

times, you may come across most anything – perhaps a belly dancer, magician or cartoonist. The menu begins with "Table Dips and Starters," served with pita bread for two or four people. There are, for instance, small plates of Tzatziki Studded with Coriander Seared Tuna ($3.95/$7.95); Peanut and Thai Chili Dip ($3.50/$5.50) or Brie with Bacon and Peppered Apples ($3.50/$6.25). There follows a quite amazing range of chilled or hot selections. And, since none of them costs more than $8.95, you can pick and choose, treating your palate to a wider array of tastes than would normally be affordable. Among the chilled selections, our favorite is the Exotic Mushroom and Grilled Vegetable Salad ($4.95).

The hot selections are far too numerous to repeat here, but the following will give you a foretaste of the offerings: Roasted Baby Lamb Chops Rolled with Goat Cheese and Fresh Herbs ($8.95); Lobster Napoleon, layers of Maine Lobster, baby spinach, oven-roasted tomatoes and crisp cumin chips ($8.75); Crispy Crab Wontons, served with a chili orange sauce ($5.75); Sage Accented Polenta baked with herbed goat cheese, and oven-roasted tomatoes ($5.95); and Grilled Vegetable and Goat Cheese Stuffed Pepper ($4.95). Not only are the dishes delicious, they are innovatively presented. One of the lobster dishes, for example, comes in a long stemmed ice cream glass. And, speaking of ice cream, if you have saved room, the desserts are extremely tempting. The wine list is wide ranging, and includes over 100 selections from around the world. And, in parallel with the tasting concept for food, the 25 wines on the by-the-glass list rotate, changing every two or three months so that, at some time or another, every wine on the list will eventually be offered by the glass. Meritäge, certainly an unusual place, is open from 5 pm to 1 am daily.

The **Slightly North of Broad**, ☎ 843-723-3424 or fax 724-3811, 192 East Bay Street, is located in a 19th-century brick warehouse. The kitchen is in full view of the dining room through a brick arch that once served as the entrance to the warehouse from the bustling docks. Self-styled a "maverick Southern kitchen," the menu's emphasis is on regional seafood and vegetables, enhanced by a multicultural flavoring using a

variety of herbs, spices and other ingredients. The décor, too, is unusual and eclectically combines an assortment of chairs, a variety of brightly colored fabrics and walls painted to resemble aged stucco. Unusual appetizers include Oven-Roasted Clams with smoked sausage, zucchini, bell pepper, country ham and garlic ($12.95/$6.95); and Crostini, grilled sourdough bread and goat cheese, topped with wilted spinach, marinated tomatoes, red onions, pecorino romano cheese and kalamata olives ($6.25). Small plates include Sautéed Squab Salad, with frisée and sherry-walnut oil vinaigrette ($9.95); or Pad Thai, a classic Thai dish combining shrimp and pork with rice noodles, Thai fish sauce, eggs, mung bean sprouts, green onions and peanuts – vegetarian with tofu ($11.25). For main courses expect the likes of Grilled BBQ Tuna, glazed with mustard and topped with fried oysters, country ham, and green onions ($17.50/$14); Coastalina Deviled Crab Cakes, sautéed blue crab claw meat seasoned with bell peppers, Tabasco, lemon and mustard and served on spicy Charleston Creole ($16.75/$9.25); or Mixed Grill, house-made sausage over cabbage, brace of quail stuffed with mushroom duxelles and apple-smoked bacon sauce ($17.25). A non-smoking restaurant, Slightly North of Broad is open for lunch, Monday to Friday, from 11:30 am to 3 pm and for dinner nightly from 5:30 pm until... whenever.

The **Slightly Up the Creek**, ☎ 843-884-5005 or fax 856-9828, 130 Mill Street, Mount Pleasant, is located across the river and enjoys views of Charleston Harbor and the shrimp boats in Shem Creek. This cousin of Slightly North of Broad has been renovated to resemble a Victorian seaside inn and offers the same maverick, contemporary, approach to cuisine. In fact, the menus are somewhat similar as to the selection of soups, salads and appetizers, small plates and main courses. Dishes might include Maverick Crab and Artichoke Dip, a warm dip with artichoke, crab and crispy tortilla chips ($5.95); Carpaccio of Beef Tenderloin, thinly sliced raw beef with fresh herbs, olive oil and romano cheese complemented by fancy mixed greens and toast points ($7.95); and Grilled Dolphin, over country-style yellow squash with seared scallops and tomato coulis

($16.50). Also a non-smoking restaurant, Slightly Up the Creek is open for dinner, nightly, from 5:30 pm.

Captain Stacks, Seafood Grill & Steam Room, ☎ 843-853-8600, 205 East Bay Street, is a nifty place to go, either for lunch or dinner, any day of the week. It is very comfortable, relaxed and eminently affordable, with most entrées in the $12 to $16 range. Seafood dishes, obviously, dominate the menu – whether grilled, sautéed, broiled or fried, but look for steamed specialties, featuring oysters, clams, shrimp, crab, lobsters and the famous Stacks Steam Pot, including oysters, clams, snow crab legs, shrimp, corn, potatoes and sausage. If seafood isn't your thing, then opt for any of the pasta, chicken, steak or pork selections. An anchor symbol next to a dish on the menu indicates it is a "Captain's Heart Healthy Choice," lower in sodium, cholesterol, calories and saturated fats.

It is not difficult at all to find **Hyman's Seafood Company**, ☎ 843-723-6000, 215 Meeting Street; simply look for the crowds of people waiting their turn to get in. Yes, it really is that popular, and not without reason. The choice, quality and value for money are unsurpassed. Seafood, the freshest of course, is the thing to order in this family-run restaurant, although there are a sprinkling of other dishes if fish isn't your thing. Expect numerous shellfish selections, and as many as 15-25 fish choices daily – which may be prepared broiled, fried, Cajun, lightly Cajun, sautéed, scampi, Caribbean jerk or steamed. Combo Platters, too, are popular, with a choice of three, five or even seven dishes. Prices won't put much of a hole in your pocket, either. A Fish 'n Chips meal can be had for less than $7, and most entrées are less than $10, although side orders and other extras served à la carte will bump that up a little. Many famous celebrities have dined here – usually while staying at the Charleston Place Hotel and entering through the backdoor – and the brass plaques on the tables indicate who has eaten where. Expect to see such names as Neil Diamond, Oprah Winfrey, Barbra Streisand, Mikhail Barishnikov, Kevin Costner, the Beach Boys and many, many, more. Don't forget to finish with one of their famous desserts. If you prefer, Hyman's Half Shell, the raw bar, is located next door. Hyman's

is open daily from 11 am to 11 pm, and, although no reservations are accepted, your name goes on a waiting list upon arrival – hence the crowds outside.

Magnolias Uptown/Down South, ☎ 843-577-7771, 185 East Bay Street, is on the site of Charleston's original Customs House. The circa 1739 warehouse was completely renovated and, on July 31st, 1990, Magnolias opened its doors, revealing an ambiance that combines old-world charm with modern décor. The latter is enhanced by the vibrantly colorful, expressionistic oil paintings of the late Rod Goebel of Taos, New Mexico, which are displayed throughout the restaurant and were commissioned especially for Magnolias. It didn't take very long for Magnolias to establish itself as one of the city's favorites. In 1993 it was awarded the prestigious DiRoNA "Award of Excellence." The culinary style here reflects the name and traditional "Down South" fare, with a contemporary "Uptown" presentation seen throughout the menu. You are likely to encounter starters such as Potato Crusted Shrimp, with a Jicama slaw and a dried tomato and red chili oil ($9.50); Pan-Fried Chicken Livers, with caramelized onions, country ham and a Madeira sauce ($6.95); or Blackened Green Tomatoes, with creamy white grits, white cheddar cheese and country ham ($6.50). Entrées might include Shellfish Over Grits, with sautéed shrimp, sea scallops, and lobster over creamy white grits with lobster butter and fried spinach ($21.95); Carolina Carpetbagger Filet, parmesan fried oysters, green beans, Madeira and Bernaise sauces ($19.95); Grilled Dolphin Filet, with creamed crabmeat, country ham, pearl hominy hash, local greens and tomato-chive ($19.95); or Grilled Game Hen, with a spicy tomato chutney and fresh green beans ($16.95). The same culinary theme carries through vividly in the "Pasta, Grits and Eggs" section of the menu, which features such unusual dishes as Spicy Shrimp and Sausage, with tasso gravy over creamy white grits ($9.95); Poached Eggs with White Lily Cream Biscuits, served with country ham, pearl hominy hash and a tomato chive hollandaise ($8.25); and Chicken and Sage Hash with Poached Eggs, served with cream biscuits and cracked pepper hollandaise ($9.50).

Don't overlook the dessert creations from the Blossom Café Bakery at Magnolias. As might be expected, the wine list, being "California Exclusive," is equally innovative, featuring wines from small California vineyards not normally available elsewhere in South Carolina. Magnolias opens at 11:30 am daily, with service ending at 10 pm on Sunday through Thursday, and at 11 pm Friday and Saturday. Reservations are recommended.

Carolina's, ☎ 843-724-3800 or 888-486-7673, 10 Exchange Street, just off East Bay Street towards the Cooper River, is considered by many critics to be one of the best eateries in Charleston. Casually elegant and contemporary in style, it prides itself on its eclectic regional cuisine. Look for such unusual appetizers as Sautéed Mussels, with leeks, tomato, white wine and butter ($9.95); Crowder Pea Cakes, with a cucumber yogurt sauce and avocado salsa ($7.25); and Hazelnut-Wasabi Tempura Shrimp – with soy-lime ginger sauce ($9.75). Soups, salads and pastas follow the same lines, and entrées feature a tempting array of seafood, shellfish, lamb, chicken, pork and steak dishes – all prepared in innovative fashion. The prices are in the upper range – some appetizers are over $10, salads can reach $16.95, and only one entrée is less than $17.50, with many over $20. Carolina's opens for dinner each evening at 5:30 pm, and reservations are certainly recommended.

The **Sonoma Café and Winebar**, ☎ 843-853-3222, 304 King Street, is housed in a beautifully restored Victorian theater and features a prominent outdoor dining area that allows a view of Charleston's shopping district. Sophisticated yet still casual, the décor is a blend of Victorian splendor and 1990s elegance. The cuisine is eclectic, featuring modern American with Latin, Asian and Caribbean influences. "Cold Small Plates" might include Sonoma Cheese Plate, with oven-dried tomato, marinated Brie, smoked gouda, aged cheddar and Boursin cheese served with seasonal fresh fruit and a mesclun salad; or Sushi Tasting Plate, with a scallop Carolina roll, smoked salmon roll and smoked gouda and grilled vegetable roll served with an Asian salad, wasabi and ponzu (each at $8.95). "Hot Small Plates" could be Adobo Pork Napoleon, pork layered

with puréed black beans, fried tortilla rounds, roasted tomatillo salsa and guacamole ($8.95); or Vegetable Empanadas, grilled shiitake mushrooms, roasted corn and goat cheese, served with sautéed spinach and jicama papaya salsa ($7.95). If "Pastas and Risottos" are to your taste, then try the Thai Seafood Risotto, fish, mussels, scallops and shrimps, with julienne peppers, snap peas, Thai basil and shiitake mushrooms ($18.95). Or, as a "Main Plate," order Cain's Vegetable Plate, grilled achiote corn, grilled asparagus, succotash roasted pepper, wasabi mashed potatoes, Asian slaw and pico de gallo ($13.95). An interesting starter for two is the Pu Pu Platter, grilled shrimp, satay, tuna wontons with orange sauce, hoisin marinated baby back ribs, a spring roll ($11.95). Helpfully, a suggested wine is listed with each pasta, risotto and main plate. Sonoma Café and Winebar is open for dinner on Sunday through Thursday from 5 to 10 pm, and opens an hour later on Friday and Saturday.

Southend Brewery & Smokehouse, ☎ 843-853-HOPS (4677), 161 East Bay Street, is a typical microbrewery – light, airy and informal, serving a selection of permanent ales and a smattering of new brews. The back of the menu contains a schematic diagram describing the brewing process, and explaining that beer is the oldest recipe known to man, dating back to 6000 BC. The cuisine is best described as regional American with Californian, Southwestern and Mediterranean influences. Pork features prominently here, either from the Wood-Burning Grill Specials or in Smokehouse "Brew B Que" Specials. Wood oven pizzas, pastas, salads and sandwiches round out the menu. This is a great place for an inexpensive lunch or dinner, and, if you want a late brew, the bar is open until 1 am nightly.

Shops, Spas, etc.

There are a number of places in Charleston where you can obtain your favorite brand of champagne for an extra-special toast. Among these is **Carolina Wine & Cheese**, ☎ 843-577-6144 or fax 577-6155, located conveniently in the center of the

Historic District at 54½ Wentworth Street. In addition, there is a fine selection of wines, split one-third French, one-third domestic and one-third international – from such countries as Australia, Austria, Chile, Germany, Italy, South Africa, Spain and Switzerland. Kirsten K. Dangerfield, the young owner, has assembled an array of cheeses to match. Besides domestic offerings, you will find mouth-watering examples from Denmark, England, France, Holland, Israel, Spain, and Switzerland, and specially bottled goat cheese. To complement these there is a variety of crackers and a tempting array of real, solid, European style breads. Look for the hand-painted wineglasses by a local artist – a nice touch for the moment and an even better souvenir. If you pop in on Friday or Saturday you taste the "Wine of the Week." On alternate Saturdays at 3 pm, five or six different wines are tasted – an event you should confirm by telephone and then definitely add to your itinerary.

At 212 King Street, across the street from Saks, is a diminutive yet elegant shop – a boutique that offers the very finest in lingerie and intimate apparel. Among the unique and delicate styles are lacy, sensual designs from the collection of Ritratti of Italy. Delectable fragrances and dainty gifts are also on offer. It could be said that **Bits of Lace** specializes in things that pamper the most feminine side of every woman. So, gentlemen, if you want to say, "I love you" in a lavishly tangible way, take your lady love to Bits of Lace and prepare to be generous.

Our Suggestion: Call ahead to ☎ 800-842-3990 or 804-577-0999 and ask the proprietress, Margaret Bobo, to prepare a gift certificate, for presentation either when you arrive at the store – or when inspiration strikes.

While romantic photography is not as popular in this region as it is elsewhere, sophisticated Charleston has a photographer who understands its merits. **Gissendanner Photography**, ☎/fax 843-769-5020, e-mail gissphoto@aol.com, 1209-C Sam Rittenberg Boulevard, will help you create an alluring and permanent reminder of your romantic weekend in Charleston.

With a reservation made at least one week in advance, Kim Gissendanner will arrange to have a licensed cosmetologist on hand to assess your requirements, and then, in a makeover session reasonably priced at $89.95, either make subtle changes that give a natural look or do a high fashion makeover. These portraits, very popular with women, are most often created for the man in their life. The effects can range from soft and innocent to hot and sultry; and what is worn, or not worn, is a matter of personal choice. Don't just settle for one pose. A set of 12 4x5 photos in a very presentable album costs just $99. The two of you can then select your favorite(s) and enlarge them, for a more visible reminder of your weekend in Charleston. Each 8x10 enlargement is $19.95, with larger portraits priced proportionately higher: an 11x14 is $74.95 and a 16x20 is $169.

Our Suggestion: Don't limit your options. Schedule a session for the two of you together and let the photographer capture a romantic moment – a tender look or a gentle touch – as evidence of the love you share.

If ever a name summed up an establishment's character, **The Silver Puffin**, ☎ 803-723-7900, at 278 King Street in the heart of historic Charleston, certainly qualifies. The owner deliberately chose the puffin, with its unique appearance and unusual habits, as the symbol for this extraordinary shop.

Three types of puffins live in the coastal areas of the United States. The tufted puffin and the horned puffin are indigenous to the northern Alaskan coast. The Atlantic puffin makes its home from along the northern tip of Maine up into the Canadian Atlantic Provinces, where it is the official bird of the Provinces of Newfoundland and Labrador. With an estimated population of 20 million, the puffin is one of the more common seabird species in the Northern Hemisphere. But the puffin's behavior is decidedly uncommon. These birds mate for the duration of their lives – usually 20 to 25 years; and both parents share the task of incubating, for about 45 days and within a hole in the ground, the single egg laid by the female each year. Superb swimmers, but poor fliers, puffins spend half the year

out at sea, diving to great depths for food. To learn more about the puffin, and to find all manner of puffin models and paraphernalia, visit the Puffin Corner at the Silver Puffin.

Also expect to find within this fascinating emporium many other items of distinction, imagination and charm. Among the kaleidoscopic array are Russian dolls, pieces of Chinese porcelain and Zimbabwean pottery, international and domestic hand-blown glass, items fashioned of cork, mirrors, jewelry, clocks and watches, a line of collectible soldiers, beautifully crafted decoys, irresistibly cuddly stuffed animals, and even an assortment of unusually decorated bowls for your pet. What's more, romantic weekenders will be happy to learn that The Silver Puffin is open every day of the week from 10 am to 6 pm.

Charleston is certainly a town that takes its history seriously. Woven within the fabric of its identity is a wealth of traditions, some of which are immediately apparent, some more subtle. In the latter category are the quaintly attractive, yet durable and practical, **Battery Benches**. These are found throughout the city, most notably along the Battery, but also in such spots as the Courtyards at the Omni Charleston Place complex. From examining old photographs, it seems that the Battery Bench first appeared along Charleston's historic Battery during the mid-19th century. Now, as then, the side pieces are made of heavy cast iron, poured into the original molds, which nearly a half-century ago were purchased, along with rights to produce the bench, by Geo. C. Birlant & Co from the original manufacturer, the J. F. Riley Iron Works of Charleston. Look closely and you may find within the intricate foliate design of the castings some of the fauna indigenous to South Carolina during the 1800s – the inverted parrot or the fox and hound, for example. After they are carefully inspected, the sides are deep-dipped in the traditional Charleston Dark Green paint. Slats of durable South Carolina cypress are crafted to endure both wear and weather. Particularly unusual is the double-length bench made at the request of the City of Charleston many years ago.

Our Suggestion: Take a stroll, hand-in-hand, along the historic Battery. Stop for a

> *little rest and a kiss on one of the inviting Battery Benches. Later in the day, make your way to* ***Geo. C. Birlant & Co., Antiques and Fine Gifts*** *at 191 King Street, ☎ 843-722-3842, 888-BIRLANT or fax 722-3846. There the helpful folk will take your order (in exchange for about $230) and arrange to have a bench shipped to your home. There you may set the bench in your garden and relive the memories.*

While you are at Geo. C. Birlant & Co., take a bit of time to browse through the collection of antiques. In fact, this is one of the largest and oldest antique businesses in the Southeast. The highly respected antique dealer and auctioneer George C. Birlant founded it in 1929. Today, the legacy is carried on by his daughter and son-in-law, Marian and Phil Slotin, and their son Andrew, in the heart of Charleston's antique district in a very large three-story building constructed around 1840. The Slotins take several trips to England each year, personally selecting fine quality 18th- and 19th-century pieces – chests of drawers, Chippendale and Queen Anne dining chairs, sideboards, linen presses and secretary bookcases, to name a few, silver, china, crystal, chandeliers and lighting fixtures, and brass.

Every now and again we find a store that is a little anachronistic in its approach – in other words, worth a visit, not only for the wide array of goods on display, but for its unique ambiance and personal service. **Luden's**, ☎ 843-723-7829, Charleston's oldest and largest marine purveyor, and a city tradition since 1867, falls into this category. When we visited, it was at Concord and Charlotte Streets but, due to construction works, it will now be operating out of East Bay and Charlotte Streets. It was a curious mixture of genuine chandlery (a ship's outfitters store with paint, hardware and rope), tiny museum, bookstore, men's outfitters, hunting store, authorized Orvis dealer and canoe dealer. Items of special interest for gifts (or to spoil yourselves) are a full range of English Barbour waterproof jackets, Brazilian handmade hammocks, ornamental painted paddles

that have cleverly been turned into horizontal hat stands, and a BBQ corner with everything you could possibly need. Also very much of interest is the most complete collection of Victorinox Swiss knives we have seen outside of Switzerland – including their Swiss Tool, and watches. Luden's is open Monday to Friday from 8 am to 6 pm and on Saturday from 8:30 am to 5 pm.

The following two very unusual stores, almost next door to each other, will be of interest to many of you.

Whether you are in the market to treat yourselves or looking for a unique gifts for someone back home, the **Washington Pen Company**, ☎ 843-723-7367, Majestic Square, 155 Market Street, merits a look. It is owned by brothers Keith and Andrew Twillman, who operate two similar stores in Washington DC, one on M Street and one at Union Station. A fine quality writing instrument, traditionally, has been a coveted gift and here you will find such quality manufacturers as Mont Blanc, Waterman, Cross and Pelikan, alongside wonderfully elegant examples by Jorg Hysek of Switzerland and Graf von Faber-Castell. The check you write may not be small, however, with some special editions selling for up to $2,500! Much more affordable is the Havana Rollerball – it comes in a cigar tube case – and the Millenium Space Pen, capable of writing in any position. Swatch watches, too, are on show; and, if you have a child at home, a Winnie the Pooh Watch or Mickey Mouse Watch might be an appropriate gift. Look, also, for leather organizers, Crane stationery and other similar gifts.

We would venture a guess that many of you have a pooch or cat back home and, if so, then you most certainly will want to stop by **Alpha Dog Omega Cat**, ☎ 843-723-1579, at 40 Archdale Street. And, you needn't feel you are alone in spoiling your pooch with a special surprise. In fact, the three lady proprietors found, while planning the project, that nearly 80% of pet owners gave their dogs holiday or birthday presents. Here, amid photos, newspaper clippings and cartoons of pets, are all the usual things you might expect of a pet shop alongside just about everything else in an animal theme for your pet or for yourselves. The prices are equally varied, with some 19th-

century signed British oil paintings running into many, many thousands of dollars.

On our final research trip to Charleston, we set out find a superb day spa. It didn't take long to find an out-of-this-world facility dedicated to the creature comforts of mere mortals – **earthling day spa**, ☎ 803-722-4737, 334 East Bay Street, at Ansonborough Square. There, you can only choose among numerous treatments and packages and, if you are feeling a little energetic, also take a session in the Pilates Exercise Studio. We expect most will want to partake of something more relaxing, however – perhaps a massage, either traditional Therapeutic, Aromatherapy or Neuromuscular Therapy. Charges range from $60 to $75 for one hour, but you can choose either a 30- or 90-minute Therapeutic Massage for $40 or $90, respectively, or a 90-minute Aromatherapy Massage for $95. Perhaps, though, a Sea Salt Glow, a delightfully exfoliating body scrub with sea salt and essential oils, at $40 for 30 minutes, will turn the tide of your romantic weekend. Or, sweeten your dispositions with a Milk & Honey richly conditioning exfoliation and total envelopment, at $79 for 75 minutes. Also look for the new Ayurvedic Body Treatments, well worth $95 for an ultra-relaxing experience: the Shirodhara uses herbal infused oils, lasts 50 minutes and will cost you $85, while the Bindi Herbal Bliss (doesn't that sound romantic?) is a detoxifying body balancing exfoliation. There is an equally wide range of facials and hand and foot treatments and an enticing array of packages that discerning romantic weekenders will want to pay particular attention to. If you want to go all out, book an All Day Retreat which, for $295, gives five hours of total pampering and includes a healthy light lunch. If that's a bit beyond your means, consider a Perfect Morning, which costs $160, lasts three hours and includes Sea Salt Glow, Aromatherapy Massage, and facial. Specially designed for gentlemen is a two-hour package, priced at $135, which includes a Biodroga Basic Facial, Sea Salt Glow and half-hour of Aromatherapy Massage. Finally, before leaving, check out the full range of skin and body care products and the extensive selection of gifts, jewelry, books and tapes. Earthling day spa is open Monday to Friday from 9 am to 7 pm and

Saturday from 9 am to 5 pm. As the management likes to say, "a visit to the earthling day spa nourishes your body, mind and spirit." Just the thing, don't you think, to put you both in a perfectly romantic mood?

We defy any of you visiting this historic city to resist the temptation of **Charleston Chocolates**, ☎ 843-577-4491, 800-633-8305, fax 577-2609, e-mail rush@charlestonchocolates.com, www.charlestonchocolates.com, 190 East Bay Street. There, you will find a most incredible array of mouth-watering handmade gourmet delights. From in-house adaptations of European family recipes come sophisticated creations made with only the finest quality chocolate, fresh heavy cream, creamy sweet AA butter, natural flavorings, fruits and nuts - with absolutely no additives, preservatives or sugar added. Such confections as vanilla butter rum, hazelnut Frangelico, brandy cherry, raspberry Chambord, Grand Marnier, Champagne or Sarah Bernhardt macaroon, are just waiting to be savored. The store is open Monday to Saturday from 10 am to 6 pm and, in season, on Sunday from midday to 5 pm. Or Charleston Chocolates will come to you, sending your favorites via Federal Express.

Finally, you wouldn't want to overlook that tried and true way to a lover's heart – flowers. Whether you rise to the occasion with a single rose or a dozen, say "I'm wild about you" with a bouquet of wildflowers, or dispel the "love me not" with the simplicity of a daisy bouquet, the helpful staff at **Charleston Florist**, ☎ 843-577-5691 or 800-487-5691, 184 King Street, will accommodate your request.

Columbia & Lake Murray

History

Columbia, named in honor of Christopher Columbus and today described as the "graceful and thriving first lady of South Carolina," was one of this country's first planned cities. It was

actually designated as the South Carolina state capital by order of the state legislature, as the result of a political compromise. By the time of the American Revolution, the backcountry, populated primarily by Scotch-Irish, German and English settlers, had twice as many voters as did the Lowcountry, which was populated by elite plantation owners. Though their numbers were smaller, the plantation owners came to dominate the South Carolina state government, which was based within their sphere of influence at Charleston. The social and political instability that this caused occasioned a compromise when the General Assembly, by legislation passed on March 22, 1786, created a new capital city. The site chosen, within the rolling hills which effectively divide South Carolina's Piedmont and Coastal Plains, was upon Taylor's Hill, which stands at the confluence of the Broad and Saluda rivers before they, together, become the Congaree River. The City of Columbia, thus, is situated near the geographic center of the state and lies approximately equidistant from New York and Miami.

Columbia was laid out over a two-mile square surrounding the site of the State House, with the city's streets mapped out on a grid system. Senate and Assembly Streets, obviously named in reference to the Legislature, were to be the main streets and grand boulevards in their own right. Streets running parallel to the river and to Assembly Street were named in honor of Revolutionary War generals and heroes. Of those, the streets east of the Assembly bore the names of officers of the Continental line, and the streets west of the Assembly bore names of South Carolina's patriots. Streets running perpendicular to the river were named with no particular rationale in mind. Work began on the new State House in 1788, and the General Assembly moved to Columbia shortly thereafter in 1791. In May of that same year, President George Washington made a tour of the Southern States. So impressed was he with Columbia's State House that he invited its architect, James Hoban, to assist in the design of the new Federal Capital City. In fact, the White House in Washington DC is an exact copy of South Carolina's first State House in Columbia.

South Carolina College, now the University of South Carolina, was chartered in 1801, and the close relationship that subsequently developed among that institution, the city, and the Legislature continues today. Within a quarter-century of Columbia's incorporation in 1806, the first textile mills arrived. Soon, the establishment of steamship connections to the Congaree and Santee Rivers allowed cotton merchants to transport goods by ship, rather than overland to Charleston. With the arrival of the railroad and, thus, greater accessibility to the eastern United States, other industries, in the form of saw mills, cotton gins, and iron foundries flourished. As a sidenote, during this period, a distinctive style of architecture, known as the "Columbia Cottage" was developed. With the aim being to assuage the extreme summer heat, builders contrived a structure to maximize the natural breezes. Built over an enclosed above-ground basement, the cottage featured halls that traversed the width of the house, windows that reached the floor and very high, often 15-foot, ceilings.

The scene was peaceful and prosperous, but disaster was on the horizon. On December 17, 1860, Columbia was the site of the First Secession Convention and, just three days later, South Carolina voted unanimously to leave the Union it had helped to found. The Civil War began with the shots fired at Charleston's Fort Sumter shortly afterwards. At the onset, war-related activities and industries, centered in Columbia because of its strategic location, augmented the city's fortunes and saw its population swell from 8,000 to over 25,000 within four years. Richardson Street, now Main Street, was the economic epicenter, with no less than 75% of the 200 businesses located on that street.

The winds of change were blowing, however, and in 1865 that concentration would prove nearly fatal for the city. Sherman's forces took Savannah at Christmastime in 1864. South Carolinians, knowing that their state would be next, but not knowing whether Charleston or Columbia would sustain the first attack, divided their forces in an effort to protect both cities. General William T. Sherman entered the state on February 1, 1865, reached the banks of the Congaree and began shelling

Columbia 15 days later. By the early morning of the following day, Union troops had overrun the city and, at 9 am on February 17, Columbia surrendered, under the assumption that all private property would be protected. That assumption proved disastrously incorrect. By sundown of the same day, a fire was reported on Gervais Street. Other blazes followed in areas throughout the city, and a chilling sight was revealed by the dawn. With the exception of the unfinished State House and the University, the heart of Columbia's business district had been reduced to ashes, a fate tragically shared by a legion of private homes. Blame, though, was hard to place, and debate over which camp was responsible for the disaster continues to this day. While sightings of Union troops torching private homes were reported, other accounts document those soldiers' efforts to save the buildings. Federal authorities ascribed these acts to the retreating Confederates, but most Columbians vowed that General Sherman was responsible.

Reconstruction was a difficult time for Columbia. By 1880, the once-thriving capital was described as a "poverty-stricken town of 10,000." During the decade that followed, however, business began to pick up. Between 1884 and 1891 the basic structure of the State House was completed, bringing to fruition a saga begun in 1851 with the laying of the first cornerstone and halted some 10 years later at the inception of the Civil War. By the 1890s, Columbia had reclaimed its status as a center for agricultural commerce and, by the beginning of the 20th century, large cotton mills employed more than 9,000 people. Prosperity continued unabated until the 1930s when, due to its diversified economy, the city endured the Great Depression, but without the disastrous effects that befell other areas. During the 1940s, Columbia's population increased by more than 33%, a by-product, in large part, of nearby Fort Jackson's role in training soldiers for World War II. Today, Fort Jackson, established in 1917 and incorporated into the City of Columbia in October 1968, is the United States Army's largest and most active initial entry training center. It houses a community comprised of nearly 100,000 soldiers, civilian employees, retirees and family members. Named after Andrew Jackson, a native

son of the Palmetto State and the seventh President of the United States, the fort encompasses more than 52,300 acres and 1,700 buildings. It is responsible for training about half of the 67,000-plus men and women who enter that branch of the armed forces annually. So forward-looking is today's Army that you can now pay Fort Jackson a virtual visit at http://jackson-www.army.mil.

In the post-World War II period, small and medium-sized businesses cropped up, even further diversifying the economy. In the 1960s, during the height of the civil rights era, Mayor Lester Bates and a bi-racial committee worked to encourage desegregation. Their efforts contributed to the integration, in 1963, of the University and, a year later, 24 African-American students entered previously all-white schools. The 1970s and subsequent years brought other cultural innovations: the Main Street Mall, Riverbanks Zoological Park, Riverfront Park and Historic Columbia Canal, and the Koger Center for the Performing Arts. These, in concert with the South Carolina State Museum, the Columbia Museum of Art and Gibbes Planetarium, offer intriguing activities for a romantic weekend in Columbia.

We think you will agree that a visit to Columbia is a rendezvous with romance. The gentle elegance of the 1800s will surely cast its spell on those allowing their imaginations to transport them back to the time when cotton was king, gentleman were gallant, and Southern belles were the toast of two continents.

Access to Columbia by road is simple and direct. Three major interstate highways, I-20, I-26 and I-77, traverse the city, a distinction shared with only three other US cities. Two other such highways, I-85 and I-95 are nearby.

Lake Murray offers attractions of a different kind, and has an interesting history of its own. The lake, conceived with thoughts of hydroelectric power in mind, is named after William Murray, the engineer who, with his partner, T. C. Williams, built what was, at that time, the world's largest earthen dam. The structure is over 200 feet tall and 1½ miles long, and the ground level of the dam measures more than a quarter-mile in thickness. Approximately 636,000 bags of cement, 122,000

tons of stone and gravel, 62,000 tons of sand, 3,987 tons of steel plate, 329 tons of reinforcing steel and 1,407 tons of structural steel were used in its construction – staggering statistics, indeed. The lake that has formed behind the dam covers over 78 square miles, encompasses 50,000 acres, and provides storage for over 760 billion gallons of water. It is 41 miles long and, at its widest point, measures 14 miles. If you stretched Lake Murray's shoreline into a straight line, it would run for 650 miles, including the islands!

When the lake was proposed, over 5,000 people made their homes on the land which the waters would overtake. Needless to say, acquisition of those properties presented a host of problems. Certain lands had been conveyed under crown grants from King James II of England, many tracts had passed from father to son without the formality of legal transfer, and many other transfer records, quite simply, had been lost or destroyed over the years. When, at long last, all lands were legally procured, residents were relocated and arrangements were made for the removal of three churches, six schools and 193 graveyards – with their 2,323 graves. Clearing of the land itself, which consisted primarily of woodlands, began in April of 1927. Around 100,000,000 board foot of lumber were harvested from the clearing of this acreage.

These days, romantic weekenders will find Lake Murray a playground of extraordinary dimensions. But, do you simply want to relax and enjoy the scenery, or try your luck at catching one of the gargantuan striped bass that inhabit its waters? The choice is yours.

Things to Do

Begin your stay in Columbia with a visit to the **Columbia Metropolitan Convention & Visitors Bureau**, ☎ 803-254-0479, 800-264-4884, e-mail visit@columbiasc.net, www.columbiasc.net. It is a very short walk from the State Capitol, on the corner of Gervais and Assembly Streets at 1012 Gervais Street. Here you can enjoy the award-winning visitors'

orientation presentation, *The Spirit of Columbia*, and pick up some interesting literature. We would particularly recommend the booklet, "Official Guide to Metropolitan Columbia South Carolina," and the brochure, "Experience Historic Columbia's Historic Houses, Columbia, South Carolina." Leaving the Visitors' Bureau, armed with the latter and consulting the street plan in the center of the former, it is time to set out along Gervais Street to explore historic downtown Columbia.

The very first site you will encounter is the **State Capitol** building. As explained above, construction on the Capital began a decade before the Civil War, during which it withstood a relentless barrage. In fact, upon the structure as it stands today, completed in 1907 and renovated recently to the tune of $33 million, are a series of bronze stars that proudly mark the scars inflicted by Union cannons.

Continuing up Gervais, the next monument to the right, at 1100 Sumnter Street, is the **Trinity Episcopal Cathedral**, ☎ 803-771-7300. Constructed in 1846, this replica of the famous York Minster Cathedral in England houses the Cathedral Parish of the Episcopal Diocese of Upper Carolina. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is the final resting-place for six bishops and seven governors.

Regrettably, much of the city's antebellum architecture was destroyed during Sherman's invasion. Of those that survived, three, along with an 1870s Victorian home, are open to the public as house museums. Also listed on the National Register of Historic Places, these are run under the auspices of **The Historic Columbia Foundation**, ☎ 803-252-7742, producer of the brochure you have in hand. Tuesday through Saturday visiting hours are 10:15 am to 3:15 pm, with the last tour concluding at 4 pm. On Sundays the schedule is 1:15 to 4:15 pm. Admission is $4 per house for adults ($3.50 with AAA membership), or a combination ticket is available at $14 ($12 with AAA). The **Robert Mills House and Park** dates from 1823, and was designed by the first Federal architect of the same name. The **Hampton-Preston Mansion** was built in 1818. The **Mann-Simons House**, circa 1850, was the home of Celia Mann, an African-American who purchased her freedom in the

years before the Civil War. The last house, though not antebellum, was the boyhood home of Thomas Woodrow Wilson, the 28th President of the United States, who lived there as a teenager between 1872 and 1874. Designed and built by Wilson's parents, the home is furnished with family pieces, including the bed he was born in. Of course, there is much more history surrounding these houses than can be conveyed here. Though you can glean much from the "Experience Historic Columbia's Historic Houses" brochure, you may prefer to take a guided tour. If so, be at the Robert Mill Gift Shop, from which tours depart hourly, any day Tuesday through Saturday between the hours of 10:15 am and 3:15 pm or on Sunday from 1:15 to 4:15 pm.

There are other historic areas you may want to consider putting on your itinerary. Among these is the **Historic Horseshoe**, original site of the South Carolina College, chartered in 1801 and known today as the University of South Carolina. The buildings here, constructed between 1805 and 1855, were pressed into service during the Civil War as both Confederate and Union hospitals. Two museums are also found close by. The **McKissick Museum** holds an impressive array of gems and minerals, Southern handicrafts and traditional or modern art. The contents of the **Confederate Relic Room and Museum** will come as no surprise. **Governor's Green**, some distance away at 800 Richland Street, is the location, you might surmise, of the Governor's Mansion. Also found here are **Lace House** and the **Caldwell-Boylston House**. All three were constructed in the quarter-century between 1830 and 1855. The **Governor's Mansion**, the youngest of them, was conceptualized as an officer's academy, but has served as the official residence of the South Carolina Governor since 1868. Romantic weekenders will have to be content to admire from a distance, however, as tour times are limited to Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday.

Now for a change of pace, head over to **Five Points**. Only a few minutes outside of downtown and just down the street from the University of South Carolina this is, without doubt, the liveliest section of Columbia. The district derives its name from the

five-pronged intersection of Santee Avenue and Harden and Devine Streets, which form a circle that was once the hub for streetcar service, running between downtown and the fashionably posh residential area, along Devine Street. While streetcars here are but a memory, some of Five Points' vehicles have made their way to New Orleans, where they are still in service today. The district, presently best described as avant-garde, is home to an array of specialty shops, galleries, restaurants featuring a wide selection of international cuisine, clubs with live entertainment, and quaint sidewalk cafés.

Among the latter, **The Gourmet Shop**, ☎ 803-799-9463, at 724 Saluda Avenue, offers fantastic food and much, much more. Whether you fancy an early Continental breakfast or a hearty lunch, a light snack of cheese, pâté or other imported foods, or a dessert and specialty coffee, you will find something to tempt your palate here. After making your selection, and if the weather is agreeable, take a seat outside, and savor the food, the company and the ambiance – which is really more typically European than American. In fact, you will soon realize that, in addition to being a unique shopping village, Five Points is a quaint community, with the new, futuristic Five Points Fountain at the corner of Saluda Avenue and Greene Street (to your right) as the social gathering point. Before paying the tab and moving on, however, turn your attention back to The Gourmet Shop, where you will find everything you could want for a late night snack in your room. Among its extensive selection of champagnes will be a bottle of vintage bubbly to appeal to anyone's taste. If your favorite tipple is wine, port, some flavor of liqueur, liquor or beer, then you won't be disappointed either. For you gentlemen, or ladies, who have been swept up in the growing popularity of cigars, or for those who have always indulged, The Gourmet Shop features an extensive selection of hand-rolled premium cigars, housed in a walk-in humidor. An impressive range of kitchen and wine accessories cleverly complements these fine foods and wines. The Gourmet Shop is open Monday to Saturday from 9 am to 7 pm and Sunday 10 am to 3:45 pm.

While on the subject of food, visitors will find a visit to the **Five Points Farmers Market**, located within the Martin Luther King Park at the intersection of Santee and Pavilion Avenues, a kaleidoscopic experience. On Saturdays, between 8 am and 1 pm, farmers of South Carolina gather here to sell a large variety of fresh fruits and vegetables.

A "Five Points' Visitor's Guide," available from the aforementioned Gervais Street Convention & Visitors Bureau, gives the particulars of many special events throughout the year. Prominent among these is **St. Patrick's Day**, when the district hosts the state's singular St. Patrick's Day parade. **Mayfest**, which ushers in the month of May and is one of the top 20 events in the Southeast (so says the local newspaper), and the **Holiday Open House**, held on the Sunday before Thanksgiving, when all of the specialty stores and galleries are open, and special holiday entertainment is staged.

Suitably relaxed and refreshed, it's back to downtown Columbia to explore the other attractions the city has to offer. Down Gervais Street from the Convention & Visitors Bureau by the Congaree River is the huge, impressive and historic **Columbia Mills Building** which, when it opened in 1894, was the world's first fully electronic textile mill. Today, it houses the **Carolina State Museum**, ☎ 803-737-4595, which is the largest of its genre in the state and among the largest in the South. The four immense floors house both traditional and interactive exhibits, showcasing the art, history, natural history, science, and technology of the Palmetto State. Open Monday through Saturday, 10 am to 5 pm; Sunday, 1 to 5 pm.

There is a vintage song that proclaims "nothing could be finer than to be in Carolina." And, indeed, Carolina's generally mild climate forecasts many a fine day. Let's explore then, a pair of interesting – and diverse – outdoor activities.

The **Riverbanks Zoo & Garden**, ☎ 803-253-4110, across the Saluda River, is reached by taking I-26 to I-126, exiting at Greystone Boulevard and following the directional signs to the zoo. Rated "one of the 10 best zoos in the United States," Riverbanks is home to over 2,000 animals that thrive in re-created

natural habitats, where few if any bars or cages separate the animals from you. The Garden is a full 70 acres comprised of woodlands, landscaped gardens – including a spectacular walled garden, historic ruins and plant collections. These are open Monday through Friday from 9 am to 4 pm and on Saturday and Sunday from 9 am to 5 pm.

At the **Riverfront Park and Historic Columbia Canal**, ☎ 803-733-8613, 312 Laurel Street, history and nature have been ingeniously combined to create an oasis amidst the hustle and bustle of a modern city. This park is located on the site of the city's premier natural resource – the confluence of the Broad and Saluda river systems into the Congaree River, and was designed around the city's original waterworks and hydroelectric plant. The Columbia Canal, itself, was built more than a century and a half ago to by-pass the dangerous rock-strewn area at the confluence and, by the last decade of the 19th century, had been adapted to provide electric power to Columbia. In 1895 it held the distinction of powering the world's first electrically operated textile mill which, as mentioned above, now houses the South Carolina State Museum. For further details on the Riverfront Park and Historic Columbia Canal, pick up a copy of the park's very informative brochure and read more about it.

If you are in luck, or have cleverly planned your trip accordingly, your romantic weekend in Columbia may coincide with a performance at the highly impressive **Koger Center for the Arts**, on the corner of Assembly and Greene Streets, next to the University of South Carolina campus. Whatever your tastes in the performing arts – a Broadway show, classical theater, symphonic music, opera, jazz, blues, big band, gospel, ballet, or ethnic dance and music – if you can name it, it will most probably be offered at one time or another. Not all of the events here are open to the public, however. Since its inauguration on January 14, 1989, the center has also hosted such events as the State of the State Address. The facility's full name is the Ira and Nancy Koger Center, and it is dedicated in honor of those two philanthropists, whose very substantial donations from personal and corporate funds made possible the construction of this $15 mil-

lion center. To reach the box office call ☎ 803-777-5112; for special requests, such as program lists or artists' biographies, contact Koger Marketing, ☎ 803-777-5113; and for any other information about Koger Center events, call ☎ 803-777-7500.

Nature lovers and sports lovers will want to pay a visit to **Lake Murray**. This lake is famed for the size of its striped and largemouth bass. The record for a striper caught in the lake is a whopping 49 lbs! They are easier talked about than caught, however, so if you want to come away with more than the proverbial tale about the big one that got away, we recommend professional assistance. There are many guide services, so let us help you narrow the field. One of these guides, known as the "Living Legend of Lake Murray," started fishing the lake in the late 1960s and has done so professionally since 1981. Okay, nothing so unusual about that, you might say. But, wait! Not only is this person 77 years old, she is a grandmother as well, which accounts for another of **Mary Delage's** nicknames, the Groovy Granny! Give her a call at ☎ 803-345-2401, agree on a price, which will include everything except your food and drink, and arrange a time to meet at her dock. Mary will take you out on her 24-foot, 115-horsepower pontoon boat for a day of fishing – which means either a day by the clock or until all on board catch the limit of five fish, at least 21 inches long, per person. Along the way, Mary will have a wealth of stories to tell.

One of the many fascinating things we learned from Mary is that, because of ecological factors, the stripers don't breed in Lake Murray. Of course, that led us to ask, "so how do they get there?" The answer: Since 1961, the management of the lake's fishery, under the direction of the South Carolina Wildlife and Marine Resources Department, has stocked the lake with striped bass fingerlings at the rate of more than 1,000,000 a year. At that rate there must be some contented bucks (male stripers) somewhere.

Whether you go with a guide or go it alone, you will need a South Carolina Out-Of-State Seven-Day non-resident fishing license, which, in early 1999, was still a bargain at just $11.

Now, having caught that big one, with the Groovy Granny's help of course, you will perhaps want to preserve it for posterity and a few boasts. The premier taxidermist in this area is **Howard Wessinger**, ☎ 803-345-2509, in Chapin. Unlike others of his kind, he doesn't charge by the inch; a 20-pounder, for example, will cost about $100 and a really, really huge one, say 50 lbs, will set you back $150. Another advantage is that he doesn't have a months-long backlog.

If you and your first mate want to be at the helm, 24-foot pontoon boats are available for rent through **Lake Murray Marina Rental Boats**, ☎ 803-781-1585. If you are angling for romance, then leave the tackle box behind in favor of a picnic basket and a bottle of champagne, seek out an isolated spot, and turn your attentions to one another. On Friday, Saturday and Sunday, the rate is $150 for a full day; on holidays the full-day rate is $250. Partial-day rental runs $70 for the minimum two-hour period, with additional hours billed at $30. It doesn't take a calculator, then, to figure that a full day of 10 to 12 hours is the better deal. Before you set sail, the staff of Lake Murray Marina Rentals will give you a 15-20-minute lesson on how to handle your vessel. A current driver's license, a signed boat rental agreement, and a $150 damage deposit are prerequisites for rental.

If you do decide to try your hand at fishing the lake, then look for one of the 24 fish attractors scattered about the lake. Fashioned of red cedar and discarded Christmas trees, each covers an area up to a tenth of an acre. They are easily recognized by a SCWNRD buoy, and many fishermen report that they provide "good to excellent" fishing.

Be sure to keep an eye out and camera ready for an unexpected appearance of the Loch Murray Monster. Presumed to be a cousin of the Loch Ness Monster, Messie has been sighted on several occasions since 1973.

For more information about Lake Murray contact the **Lake Murray Tourism & Recreation Association**, ☎ 803-781-5940, 800-951-4008, fax 781-6197, www.lakemurraycountry.com. If you are in the Irmo area, then pop into their office, located in Lorick Plantation Home, circa 1840, a graceful survivor of the Civil War. It is open Monday through Friday from 9 am to 5 pm, Saturday from 10 am to 4 pm and Sunday from 1 to 5 pm. While you are there, notice the trophy fish adorning the walls. They were caught by Mary Delage and donated to the office.

Sweet Dreams

Columbia

The **Richland Street Bed & Breakfast**, ☎ 803-779-7001, fax 256-3725, at 1425 Richland Street in the middle of the Historic District of downtown Columbia, matches the character of the area perfectly. Like its neighbors, it looks as if it has been around for many decades, but it hasn't. Proprietors Naomi and Jim Perryman had a long-standing dream. One day, they hoped to work together to transform an old home in the downtown area into a fine period-style bed and breakfast. When they were ready to put their plan into action, however, disappointment soon followed – a suitable property was nowhere to be found. The Perrymans, though, were indefatigable in their aspirations. They designed their own house, and foundations for this very delightful 6,000-square-foot building, both Victorian and historic in appearance, were laid in February of 1992.

On passing through the wrought iron gate and strolling up the brick walkway, the nostalgic scene will transport your thoughts to yesteryear. Along the length of the lower level of the façade runs a breezy veranda – with a gazebo gracing one corner and balcony porch connecting the two bays of the story above. The interior design incorporates many of the elegantly grand features prevalent in finer Victorian architecture: 10-foot ceilings, majestic columns to partition the living from the

dining area, an expansive foyer, and an open stairway that ascends gracefully to the second-floor level. Two guest rooms, which flank the foyer, the kitchen area, and the Perryman's living area, complete the ground floor space. On the second floor an open central hallway, encircled by the banister rail and overlooking the foyer below, leads to six additional guest rooms.

Each of the eight guest rooms, named in true Southern tradition after a South Carolina Governor, has a private bath, TV, and telephone and are computer-friendly. Carrying on the theme established in the beautifully appointed public areas, the décor is traditional, warm and distinctive. Three rooms have a queen-sized bed and three have king-sized beds, with the rates ranging between $79 and $105 per night. Of more interest to romantic weekenders will be the McNair Suite and the West Room, each with king-sized bed and a whirlpool bath. These rent for $140 and $130 per night, respectively. All rates include a deluxe Continental breakfast served in the dining room, and seasonal afternoon refreshments, taken either in the breakfast room or on the front porch.

Given the Perrymans attention to detail, you would expect nothing less than the highest standard of personal service, and that is exactly what you will get. Not surprisingly, this smoke-free B&B has been awarded the highly sought AAA Four-Diamond status.

The **Chestnut Cottage**, ☎ 803-256-1718, a smoke-free bed and breakfast at 1718 Hampton Street, has a longer history to tell. Built around 1850, it was, during the Civil War, the home of General James and Mary Boykin Chesnut. History lovers will be interested to know that it was from the home's front porch that Confederate President Jefferson Davis, when visiting the Boykins, gave a speech to the citizens of Columbia. Mary, a sociable gentlewoman who loved entertaining, kept a diary both while living here and at Mulberry Plantation in Camden. Following her death in 1886, her memoirs were published under the title *Diary from Dixie*. An edition revised by

C. Vann Woodward, published nearly a century later in 1982, won the Pulitzer Prize in history. A copy, for your reading pleasure while at the cottage, will be found on your bedside table.

Mary's legacy of hospitality lives on in the Chestnut Cottage today. The five attractively furnished guest rooms, though authentic to the construction period in décor, enjoy the modern amenities of television, telephone, and private bath, with luxurious linens and robes. The Mary Boykin Chesnut Room has a queen-sized four-poster bed and the General James Chesnut Room features a queen-sized Cannon Ball bed and a unique collection of Civil War memorabilia and books. Each rents for $75 a night. Overlooking the piazza and renting for $150 per night, the President Jefferson Davis room boasts a king-sized pencil post bed, exquisite antiques and a deluxe whirlpool bath. The final two rooms, however, are the most romantic. In the Carriage House Bridal Suite, at $175 a night, you will be ensconced in the luxury of a canopied king-sized bed – where you will be served a sumptuous Southern breakfast and can enjoy the relaxation of a bubbling whirlpool. The Carriage House II Suite is similarly appointed, with a king-sized bed that reposes behind double French doors, an even larger Jacuzzi, and a breakfast nook where you can linger over breakfast in privacy and at your leisure. The rate for the Carriage House II is $150 a night. Guests are further treated to afternoon libations and refreshments, nightly turndown service and a hearty breakfast, but those so inclined are asked to restrict smoking to the piazza.

Claussen's Inn at Five Points, ☎ 803-765-0440, 800-622-3382 and fax 799-7924, 2003 Greene Street, is in the lively Five Points neighborhood. It was in 1928 that Claussen's Bakery opened the doors of this landmark building. The structure may remind visitors of Greenville, South Carolina (another romantic destination featured in this guide) – where a similar Claussen's Bakery building is found in that city. Here in Columbia, the historical architectural features of the bakery's un-

usual low and long edifice were retained in its transformation to a B&B. Still, you will find the expected modern amenities – private bath, color TV, radio, telephone and air-conditioning – and such delightful extras as an outdoor Jacuzzi. Its 29 rooms, classified Queen, King or the very attractive Two-Level Loft King, feature a variety of décor and are furnished with a four-poster bed, an iron bed or a brass bed. The service is exemplary. Guests enjoy a Continental breakfast and a host of special touches – nightly turndown service with chocolates and brandy and complimentary wine and sherry served in the lobby. Rates range from $120 to $135 per night.

The **Sheraton Columbia Hotel**, ☎ 803-731-0300 or fax 731-4892, I-20 & Bush Road, near I-26, is conveniently located a few minutes from the State Capitol and just 10 minutes from Lake Murray. Romantics who are looking for the extra amenities offered by a sizeable resort-style hotel will want to give the Sheraton serious consideration. It has 240 nicely appointed rooms, including 35 Whirlpool Suites, a health spa with sauna and whirlpool, and both indoor and outdoor pools. And guests need not wander far for evening amusement. Dine on-site at Andrew's, a full service restaurant, cut a rug or dance cheek-to-cheek in the Dance Factory Night Club, or share a favorite beverage in either of the two lounges. Discerning romantic weekenders will opt for the Suite Heart, Honeymoon & Anniversary Package, a good value at $199 per night per couple. This includes accommodations in a Junior Whirlpool Suite with a king-sized bed; both dinner and breakfast for two at Andrew's; a treat of champagne, strawberries and chocolates delivered to your suite; turndown service; bubble bath for the whirlpool tub and a late 2 pm check out time.

Tables for Two

Miyo's, ☎ 803-779-6496 or fax 779-6498, 922 South Main Street, on the corner of Main and Pendleton Streets, found itself on the fast track to success. Opened in 1996, it has already been dubbed the "Best Oriental and Best Ethnic Restaurant" in Columbia. The unusual name may sound oriental but, in

fact, it is an amalgam of the first two letters of the owners' Christian names. By deliberate design this is not a run-of-the-mill Chinese eatery. Miyo's is best described as a fun and unconventional place where they take their cooking very seriously indeed. The mix of Shanghai and Szechuan dishes is tantalizingly delicious, and the fresh fish special, which changes daily, will be prepared to your specifications – steamed, sautéed or pan fried – and served with steamed vegetables, rice or noodles. Portions are generous and the prices are, to say the least, reasonable. Appetizers are in the $2.95-$6.95 range, soups and side orders are $1.95 to $7.95, and chicken, beef, pork, seafood and vegetarian entrees range from an amazingly low $2.95 upwards to $10.95. Miyo's is open for lunch Monday through Friday from 11:30 am to 2:30 pm and for dinner Monday through Saturday from 5:30 to 10 pm.

The **Villa Tronco**, ☎ 803-256-7677, fax 256-4336, www.colasc.com/villatronco, situated Uptown in an historic firehouse at 1213 Blanding Street, was Columbia's first Italian restaurant. Its history began a half-century ago during World War II, when Sadie and James Tronco began cooking spaghetti and meatballs for a handful of soldiers of Italian heritage stationed at Fort Jackson. Sadie – affectionately known as Mama Tronco – also gets the credit for introducing pizza to Columbia. The running of the Villa is still a family affair, and the rest of their intriguing history is recounted on the reverse of the menu. They serve the traditional Italian favorites ($12.50 to $15.50 range), featuring homemade pastas and breads, and pizza ($8 to $16). The family's special pride, however, lies in their fresh seafood dishes ($15.95 to $17.95 range). The Seafood Italiano (shrimp, scallops, mussels, clams, calamari and flounder sautéed in marinara sauce and served over linguine) comes highly recommended, as do the not-so-Italian Maryland-Style Crab Cakes. Be absolutely sure, though, that you save room for dessert. Their cheesecake is to die for! No wonder, then, that Villa Tronco was voted "Best of Columbia 1996-97" by readers of *Columbia Metropolitan Magazine*.

The **Vista Brewing & Bistro**, ☎ 803-799-2739 or fax for take-out 799-0090, is just down the road from the Convention & Visi-

tors Bureau at 936 Gervais Street. For the "brewing" part, it offers a selection of handcrafted ales. For the "bistro" part, a surprisingly varied menu includes appetizers from a Raw Bar and such entrées as Cajun-Style Grilled Catfish Fillet, served with fresh collard greens and potato du jour ($15.50); Rabbit à la Moutarde, with pasta du jour ($15.25); Crispy Duck Confit, with imported French flageolets beans ($15.25); or Choucroute, a traditional Alsacian dish of pork loin, garlic saucisson, knockwurst and Black Forest bacon, slowly cooked with sauerkraut, beer and wine ($17.50). Lunch is served between 11:30 am and 2:30 pm on Monday through Saturday and dinner is served from 5:30 to 10:30 pm, Monday through Saturday. It also, conveniently for romantic night owls, offers a special late dinner menu – mostly breakfast foods and sandwiches, which is available Monday through Saturday from 10:30 pm to 1 am.

Shops, Spas, etc.

Champagne always brings an extra sparkle to a romantic weekend. In Columbia, the place to go for the cork to pop is **The Gourmet Shop** on Saluda Avenue at Five Points. For the details and a discussion of the many other facets of this interesting shop see the *Things to Do* section above.

The Blossom Shop, ☎ 803-799-3730, 2001 Devine Street, is abloom with all manner of colorful, fragrant arrangements and bouquets. So don't keep your partner playing the daisy game. Say "I love you" with the traditional dozen roses, or "I'm wild about you" with a spray of wildflowers. Whatever the message, the designers at the Blossom Shop will work their magic to ensure that your message is clearly beautiful and beautifully clear.

We often recommend that romantic weekenders consider the pampering possibilities of the day spa. In Columbia we point you in the direction of **Gore & Gore**, ☎ 803-781-4515 or fax 781-2447, 7193 St. Andrews Road, who fashion themselves as an "art and science" salon. Here, on Tuesday to Saturday, and by appointment only, you may choose from a host of relaxing

options for both men and women. Perhaps you would like to ease some aching muscles with Full Body Massage Therapy (one hour for $45 or half an hour for $25), or rejuvenate your skin with a Mini-Facial (30 minutes for $35) or Deep Cleansing Facial (45 minutes for $45).

Norman's Suggestion: Guys, call ahead of time to tailor a Day of Luxury package as a surprise for your other half and, while you're at it, treat yourself too.

Snapz, Gourmet to Go, ☎ 803-407-3222, Friarsgate Centre in Irmo, 1107 North Royal Tower, is the place to go for picnic goodies before you set out on the lake, or for a late night snack to take back to your room. You will find cheeses, meats, salads, garlic bread and, for a sweet finish, a fine array of homemade desserts and chocolates. Look, especially, for the really neat chocolate-coated spoons for stirring coffee. There is also a varied selection of wines – all hand-chosen and tasted by the owners – and beers, including some great Canadian ones that ferment in the bottle. If you want your selections ready to go when you arrive, call ahead for a custom-designed basket. A Wine Basket will cost you $21.95 and up. Hours are Monday to Friday from 11 am to 9 pm and Saturday from 11 am to 7 pm.

On each of our romantic weekends, we try to find something to take away that will remind us of that time together. If you have the same tradition, or want to begin one of your own, we offer the following suggestion for visitors to Columbia. The **One Eared Cow Glass, Hand Blown Glass Gallery & Studio**, ☎ 803-254-2444, is now currently in its third location at 1102 Huger Street. An overview of their history and a full explanation of its most unusual name are found on the rear of their brochure. And, this will be more than a shopping experience. From the gallery you can observe the glassblowers, using techniques dating back thousands of years, creating objects from 2,400°F molten glass. The range, size and color of these magnificent creations are astounding, and each one is signed and dated by the artist to ensure its originality. Visit Monday to Friday from 8 am to 6 pm and Saturday from 10 am to 4 pm.

Conway

Myrtle Beach has more than its share of classy entertainment, and is by no means an unattractive place. Surprisingly, though, for a resort area that draws multi-millions of visitors annually, top-level accommodations are scant. Also, while many may want to take advantage of Myrtle Beach's facilities, particularly the theaters, they might rather stay in a quieter, more historic place. If that is your preference, let us introduce you to Conway, almost in the shadow of its neighbor's high-rise hotels and just 15 to 20 minutes to the west. There you will find a particularly wonderful inn, the nicest for many miles around and one of our favorites.

History

The first recorded visit of Europeans to the area was in the early 16th century by Spanish explorers who were just passing through. At that time it was populated by the Waccamaw Indians, who called the land "Chicora." It was a full two centuries later before English colonialists established a settlement alongside the Waccamaw River. The process began when, in 1729, King George II of England purchased South Carolina from the Lord's Proprietors. The following year he sent Robert Johnston to Charleston as Royal Governor with a mandate to lay out 11 townships on navigable rivers, one of which was to be the Waccamaw. In 1734, plans for Kingston (Kings Town) were completed, and the first inhabitants arrived the next year. This makes the town one of the oldest in the nation, predating such cities as Atlanta, Washington DC and Denver.

At that time, Kingston was part of the Parish of Prince George, Winyah, established in 1722 in George Town, and remained so as long as that parish was a political subdivision. In 1768, the state was re-divided into seven districts, with Kingston and the surrounding area being a part of the George Town District. This district was further subdivided, in 1785, into four coun-

ties, one of which was also named Kingston. In 1801, the citizens petitioned the General Assembly for the county to be designated a district, and for a name change from Kingston to Hugerborough. The General Assembly agreed to the first request, but, strangely, decided that the name of the district would be "Horry" (pronounced O-Ree) and the name of the town "Conwayborough," in honor of local patriots, Generals Robert Conway and Peter Horry. These two soldiers distinguished themselves in the Revolutionary War, during which, largely because of its isolated position, the town was spared.

Although the first courthouse was erected in 1802, it was less than a quarter-century later, in 1824, that the State Commissioner for Public Works, Robert Mills (who happened to be the designer of the Washington Monument and other public buildings in Washington DC) was commissioned to design a new, much grander, brick and mortar one, which he dignified with columns of Corinthian design. Population growth, though, was slow. At the turn of the century Conwayborough had just 100 people, which had doubled by 1832, but still numbered only 476 (273 whites and 203 blacks) in 1860. During this period much of the land along the Waccamaw River was developed into plantations, the rest of the district was divided into small farms and plantations, and the principal industries were turpentine for naval stores and lumber.

When South Carolina seceded from the Union, the area's residents rallied to the cause. Two residents of Conwayborough, Thomas W. Beaty and Benjamin E. Sessions, signed the Ordinance of Secession in Charleston, and approximately 90% of Horry's eligible men joined the Confederate Forces.

An edict in 1868 changed the district to a county, and today it is the largest in South Carolina – comprising one twenty-seventh of the state's area. Conway, itself, is the largest county east of the Mississippi, containing more land than the State of Rhode Island.

The 1870s saw the lumber and naval stores industries expand, with steamships on the Waccamaw River being the main transportation link for the region. Riverboats transported people between Conwayborough and Georgetown until 1887, when the

railroad reached Conway – the name of which had been shortened by the South Carolina General Assembly in 1883. The tracks, which actually ran straight down Main Street, opened Conway to the outside and, fortuitously, rekindled the lumber industry. Sawmills and lumberyards multiplied throughout the county, with Conway as the hub; the largest lumberyard in the county, and possibly in the state, was the Conway Lumber Company, located on the site of the present-day marina. Logs were floated down the Waccamaw, or hauled from the forest by logging trains, then sent by rail to distant markets.

In 1898 Conway was incorporated and elected its first mayor. Also in that year, however, devastation struck in the form of a fire that destroyed most of the downtown area. In this case, thankfully, good came from bad, as many of the attractive brick buildings that adorn Main Street today have their foundations in the subsequent rebuilding effort. The following year, Conway businessmen commissioned the construction of the Seashore and Conway Railroad Line to the coast, giving local citizens access to the nearby beaches, where they built the first cottages and established a summer retreat that they called, unimaginatively, "New Town." As we have explained in the appropriate chapter, "New Town" was later renamed Myrtle Beach, and is now an internationally known resort that has grown exponentially.

Conway's growth, too, has expanded since its incorporation. From a population of just 705 according to the census figures of 1900, it had reached 9,000 by 1960 and is now estimated at around 15,000. Today's visitors will find in this particularly pleasant town an ambiance that is, in many respects, surprisingly sophisticated as well.

Things to Do

We would normally recommend that your first stop should be at the **Conway Area Chamber of Commerce**, ☎ 843-248-2273, fax 248-0003, e-mail chamber@sccoast.net, 203 Main Street, Conway, SC 29526, at the foot of the restored Memorial

Bridge. But, as it is currently open Monday to Friday from 9 am to 5 pm only, this may not be practical for romantic weekenders in Conway. All is not lost, however, as the Chamber has arranged to have the information you need most available at other locations. The "Welcome to Historic Conway, South Carolina" brochure, containing the details of the Conway Historical Trail and descriptions of the historic places, may be found at The Horry County Museum and at the offices of The Kingston Lady. That is, if you haven't picked one up first at The Cypress Inn. You can also pay the Chamber a virtual visit at www.conwaysc.org.

Separate from the services offered by the Chamber is the Conway Visitor Program which also offers a wealth of information and sponsors a number of self-guided tours, including: a Guide to Conway's Famous Live Oak Trees, a Guide to the River and Warehouse District, and a Spring Time Guide for Conway in Bloom. The Visitor Program operates from within, and shares a fax number with, the Chamber of Commerce Building, and may be reached by telephone at ☎ 843-248-1700.

The first stop on the Conway Historical Trail is the **Conway City Hall**, which will sound suspiciously like the elegant Horry County Courthouse built in 1824 and described above. They are, in fact, one and the same. In 1907, that courthouse was sold to the town of Conway for use as a town hall, and a new courthouse erected just down the road the following year. Of the 39 sites on the trail, 17 are on the National Register of Historic Places but few are open to the public. Of those that are open, The **Horry County Museum**, 438 Main Street, on the corner of Fifth and Main Streets, merits a visit. Making use of a wide variety of materials and arranging them in a series of educational and attractive self-explanatory exhibits, the museum gives visitors an informative insight into the history of the county. Hours are Monday to Saturday from 10 am to 5 pm and admission is free.

As you are out and about town, you will come across numerous enticing shops; one, to our minds, is particularly interesting. That there should be such a place as the **Bodega**, ☎ 843-248-9271, 301 Main Street, is indicative in itself of the sophistica-

tion of sleepy little Conway. It is, in fact, unique and, certainly, would not be out of place in a large, modern metropolis. Inside, expect to find a colorful, kaleidoscopic array of goods that incorporates almost anything you can think of, and many that you cannot, to do with eating and drinking. As to drinking, much attention is given to coffee and tea paraphernalia, wine accessories, glasses and tankards to hold your favorite brew, as well as yards and half-yards of ale, and a cocktail corner. As to food, there are a BBQ area, pots and pans like those used by Emeril on his TV show, Cuisinart electrical appliances, butcher blocks, knives and flatware. Take a look, also, at the Mexican clay ovens on stands that are used for fires and/or for cooking. On the comical side, if rather irrelevantly, there is a bathtub full of rubber ducks. The Gourmet Corner is especially tempting, and full of goodies to take back to The Cypress Inn for a late-night snack – cheeses, smoked seafood, salmon, pâtés, olives, crackers and biscuits, bottled water and a particularly flavorful Italian orange soda. It should come as no surprise to you, then, when dining later at the Rivertown Bistro, that both businesses are co-owned by the same proprietor.

The only other activities in Conway revolve on and around the Waccamaw River. The soon to be extended 850-foot **boardwalk**, alongside the 5,000,000-year-old "black water" river, invites a stroll beside its tranquil waters, and bird watchers will be in their element. The boardwalk also hosts celebrations throughout the year, notably the **Conway Riverfest** held on the Saturday before or on the 4th of July. December brings festivities of an altogether more original kind as the Riverwalk is transformed into a Winter Wonderland of colorful lights, decorated trees and nostalgic scenes illuminated from 5 to 10 pm nightly. If you happen, or maybe plan, to be in Conway on the first Saturday in December, then certainly don't miss the Conway Boat Parade, a brightly lit flotilla that sets sail at 6 pm.

Visitors to Conway will find a sail on the ***Kingston Lady***, 4 Elm Street, to be a pleasant and informative diversion. Contact them at ☎ 843-248-4033, 248-1711, 800-361-6058, fax 381-0019, e-mail captain@kingstonlady.com or www.kingstonlady.com.

The ship boards at 1:30 pm for departure at 2 on a two-hour cruise along the Waccamaw River. The vessel, built in 1963, has previously worked in New Jersey and Maine doing offshore drift fishing and sightseeing, whale watching and harbor tours. She is 65 feet long and, at capacity, carries 140 people. At rarely more than seven mph, you will navigate downstream and south towards Bucksville, U-turn near the historic Upper Mill Plantation, and return to the City Marina. The captain, Dick Davis, delivers a fascinatingly informative narration, during which you will learn, among other things, the definition of the term "black water." He and his wife Dianne take great pleasure in pointing out the wildlife – snakes, otters, alligators, blue herons and, if you are in luck, deer and squirrels actually swimming in the river. The cruise costs $15 per person and, although walk-ons are welcome, it is best to reserve ahead.

On several occasions each year, the *Kingston Lady* hosts an overnight Couples Cruise, which will certainly appeal to the more romantic among us. After departing from Conway at 8:30 am on Saturday morning, you will enjoy a Continental breakfast and lunch on board before arriving in Georgetown around 2:30 pm. An hour and a half is allowed for exploring the town before you board again and head for the dock at Georgetown Landing and your overnight berth in the Hampton Inn. Dinner, at 7 pm, is followed by an evening cruise with live entertainment. Following an early Sunday brunch at 10 am, couples reboard the *Kingston Lady*, where a buffet lunch is served before arrival back in Conway at 4 pm. The cost is $300 per couple, a good value for a unique experience.

Would-be captains and fishing enthusiasts will want to check out the **Conway City Marina**, where canoes, pontoon boats and fishing boats are available for rent. Rods, reels and other such paraphernalia are also close at hand; and a fishing guide can be arranged with a little notice.

Well, that is about the sum of things to do in Conway. Its simplicity and quiet is the source of its charm. You can park your car and forget it as everything is within walking distance. And the change of pace from your daily routine is conducive to ro-

mance. Citizens here say they measure the passage of time differently: "in the annual rings of the mammoth live oaks, in the ebb and flow of the dark mysterious Waccamaw, and in the annual explosion of dogwood, azalea and wisteria." We couldn't have said it better ourselves!

For those with their hearts set on some action, there are numerous attractions within a very short distance. Myrtle Beach is just a few minutes, with its well-advertised shopping centers and a host of activities – the aquarium, NASCAR miniature track, multiple themed restaurants, theaters and fun fair, to name a few. Georgetown, Murrells Inlet and Pawleys Island, with their very different characters, are not far to the south, certainly less than an hour's drive. Our very special recommendation, though, if you are going to venture this far from Conway, is that you take time to visit the absolutely amazing **Brookgreen Gardens**, ☎ 843-237-4218, fax 237-1014 or e-mail info@brookgreen.org, PO Box 3368, Pawleys Island, SC 29585. This an absolutely incredible place, described in detail in the *Georgetown* chapter of this guide.

Sweet Dreams

The **Cypress Inn**, ☎ 843-248-8199, 800-575-5307, fax 248-0329, e-mail acypress@sccoast.net, or www.acypressinn.com, is at 16 Elm Street. Opened in May of 1997, this is the delightful creation of innkeepers, Carol and Jim Ruddick. Jim and Carol had a goal of opening a B&B; and, in their determination to make a success of it, they attended seminars and even sought advice from one of the premier consultants in the industry. Their first thought was to purchase an established B&B and they searched far and wide along the eastern seaboard for the perfect property in the perfect location. They were contacted, during this period, by developers in Conway, who had a vision for the Riverfront District that included establishing a first-rate bed and breakfast. There was one problem, however. There were no historic homes in the target area suitable for the purpose. Being a determined and inspired couple, however, the Ruddicks rose to the challenge and set out to create one of their

own. Approaching the project meticulously and with very clear ideas of what the end result would be, they embarked upon a design process that stretched over two years; construction took another eight months. The end result stands as a testimony to their creativity and tenacity. Guests of the Cypress Inn enjoy a perfectly matched combination of an old-world ambiance and service ethic with modern facilities, where absolutely nothing is overlooked except the Waccamaw River! The payoff is a Four-Diamond AAA rating, making the Cypress Inn one of just over 20 establishments in South Carolina to earn that honor.

The 12 guest rooms, each with its own personality and décor, gently mix the old and new. Most have a king-sized or queen-sized bed, and all have cable TV, telephone, and a private bath with shower and individual climate controls. Eleven feature a Jacuzzi tub, some of which are built for two. Rates, exclusive of tax, range from $105 to $140, and at some times of the year a minimum stay requirement may apply.

After partaking of a full breakfast, grab a complimentary newspaper and head for the front porch adjacent to the marina. It is a perfect place to linger, lulled into peaceful oblivion by the rhythmic to and fro of a Carolina rocker. If, later, you feel the need for a little more strenuous activity, Jim and Carol can arrange for you to enjoy the local fitness club, with its state-of-the-art equipment, pool and sauna. Or, if a gentle ride around town would be more to your liking, bicycles are available as well. Finally, Jim and Carol, romantics themselves, will gladly arrange for the following loving touches: champagne, strawberries and chocolate truffles for $30; a dozen roses at $50; a one-hour hot air balloon flight, plus refreshments, for $300 a couple; or, for the ultimate pampering, an on-site massage at $65 per hour, per person.

Of special interest to readers of this guide will be the inn's two romantic weekend packages. The newest of these is "Romance in the Clouds," priced at $760 per couple plus tax. This includes two nights accommodations in a luxury room with Jacuzzi; a full breakfast for two each morning; champagne, roses and chocolate truffles; dinner on the second evening and a 3½-hour hot air balloon ride, with brunch, which leaves directly from

the inn (weather permitting, of course). Alternatively, plan your trip around their very special "Romantic Valentine Weekend" package, which may be arranged for the traditional lovers' weekend or to coincide with your wedding anniversary. Upon arrival on Friday evening, you will enjoy hors d'oeuvres and wine. Saturday begins with a Continental breakfast, followed at noon by a romantic candlelight ceremony during which the two of you will renew your marriage vows. Refreshments are served immediately afterwards. The rest of the time is yours to enjoy in an ambiance lovingly fashioned to bring a spark back into your romance. Who knows – by the time you appear for a full breakfast the next morning, it may have fanned into a flame. To be assured of the time you want, you need to reserve early. Inquire when you call about the current rates.

Tables for Two

The **Rivertown Bistro**, ☎ 843-248-3733, 1111 Third Avenue, is, unquestionably, the finest place to eat in Conway. It would not be an exaggeration to say that it could more than hold its own with many of its counterparts in much grander locations. The chef here thrives on creativity, so you will never know exactly what to expect, but never doubt that it will tantalize your taste buds. Appetizers, in the $4 to $8 range, might include Crawfish au Gratin, on fried zucchini with roasted sweet red pepper cream, or Sundried Tomato and Fresh Herb Whipped Goat Cheese. A lighter starter is the Raspberry Salad, mixed lettuces and fresh vegetables topped with roasted pecans, feta cheese and raspberry vinaigrette ($3.50). Entrées, varied in choice and in price ($10.95 to $21.50), include such innovative combinations as Lightly Blackened Dolphin, on a jalapeño grit cake topped with blue crab shallot cream; or Chicken Breast Stuffed with Pesto and Goat Cheese, sautéed and finished with roasted red pepper sauce. A split plate is available, served with appropriate sides for a charge of $2. The wine list is equally eclectic, with many, including the special, served by the glass. The lunch menu features a wide range of salads, sandwiches and bistro specialties. The Rivertown Bistro is open for lunch,

Tuesday through Friday, from 11:30 am to 2 pm, and for dinner, Tuesday through Saturday, from 5 to 9:30 pm.

The **Side-Wheeler Riverfront Grill**, ☎ 843-248-7048, 110 Main Street, found its home within a converted warehouse on the waterfront that has, in previous incarnations, had a variety of uses. Since its opening in 1994, it has gained a reputation for friendly service – by waitresses in period costume and good food. Wood-fired steaks, chicken, ribs and seafood are among the house specialties and include such tempting choices as Lobster-Crab Cakes ($21.95); Jambalaya ($15.95); and Pud's Shrimp and Grits, fried shrimp, country ham pieces, sweet peppers blended together in a light cream sauce, served over Side-Wheeler grits and topped with melted white cheddar cheese ($14.95). The lunch menu, too, offers an enticing selection of appetizers, soups, salads, sandwiches and wood-fired and Side-Wheeler specialties. Of these, the Side-Wheeler Fried Green Tomato Sandwich, fresh local green tomatoes, sliced and breaded in flour-cornmeal and deep-fried, topped with country ham and melted Monterey Jack cheese on sour dough bread ($8.50), really set our mouths to watering! The Side-Wheeler Riverfront Grille is open for lunch, Monday through Saturday, from 11:30 am to 2:30 pm, and for dinner, Tuesday through Thursday, from 5 to 9 pm and Friday and Saturday from 5 to 10 pm.

Georgetown

History

Native American Indians were the earliest inhabitants of the tidelands in this area, living nomadically, fishing from the ocean and inland waters and hunting on the forested land. But few reminders exist today of that era, with the exception of Indian names such as Pee Dee, Wee Nee, Waccamaw, Winyah and Santee. The first Europeans, under the leadership of Spaniard Lucas Vasquez de Ayllon and thought to have arrived around 1526, undertook to found a colony in the Winyah Bay. Within a

year, though, the twin threats of Indians and disease had forced them to abandon the site. It was over a century later that the first permanent English settlers arrived and set up business trading with the Indians. In 1721, Prince George, later to become King George II, declared the territory a royal province and land was granted to the settlers for the asking. The history of Georgetown proper began in 1729, when Elisha Screven founded "George Town," named after King George II, laying out, across 174¼ acres, a five-block by eight-block grid which he subdivided into 220 lots. Thus, Georgetown is the third oldest town in South Carolina, falling behind only Charleston and Beaufort.

George Town quickly became a thriving seaport, with the main source of business being Naval stores such as pitch, turpentine, resin and timber – all products taken from the numerous local pine trees. Business, though, was impeded by the fact that all foreign exports and imports, by decree, had to pass through Charleston, where duties and freight were paid. This was a particular source of aggravation to the George Town citizenry, whose town had both a port and a navigable ocean inlet. A petition for relief was made directly to the King of England, who declared George Town an official port of entry in 1732 and forthwith dispatched to the town a King's "Collector of Customs."

A far away European dispute, between English, French, Spanish and Portuguese traders, left England without a source for the much-prized royal blue dye, indigo – a turn of events that led to untold riches for George Town. The indigo plant was indigenous to the surrounding area and, in fact, grew wild along the coastal plains. It didn't, therefore, take long for local planters to realize the huge profits that could be made through its cultivation. Because blue is the most difficult color to produce in a dye, indigo was highly coveted, and the George Town County variety produced not just one, but three fine colors, known as copper, purple and fine flora. Trade was so profitable that an aristocratic society developed around indigo plantation owners, whose wealth rivaled that of European royalty. These planters formed the Winyah Indigo Society, and the grand hall

that they built stands still as a monument to this era. The Revolutionary War, however, brought changes to George Town. The subsidy by Britain to indigo farmers, which began in 1742, was, of course, withdrawn and the lifestyle it had fostered collapsed shortly thereafter. Wild indigo plants, though, still bloom undaunted here every spring, more than two centuries after the industry's demise.

On the subject of the Revolution, the area wasn't short of patriots. Thomas Lynch, Jr., one of George Town's most powerful planters, was among the first to sign the Declaration of Independence. His home, Hopsewee, a combination of the names of the Hop and See Wee tribes, can be visited, but, unfortunately for romantic weekenders, only during the week. Another planter, Francis Marion, the legendary "Swamp Fox," with his followers harassed the British endlessly until they abandoned George Town in 1781. A decade later, in 1791, on his famous tour of the Southern states, President George Washington acclaimed these heroes from the steps of the Masonic Lodge in George Town. It was shortly thereafter, in 1798, that the town's name was changed to its present form, Georgetown.

Local geographical conditions, a network of tide-controlled fresh water rivers and rich marshy areas, were soon found favorable to the cultivation of rice. The profitability of that crop came to rival that of its predecessor, indigo, though it would, itself, fall afoul of another war. Rice production was extremely labor-intensive and, of course, slaves supplied the labor. In fact, throughout the 1880s the slaves comprised as much as 85% of the area's total population. Over 40,000 acres were cleared and more than 780 miles of canals dug as rice plantations cropped up across the region. Each plantation was serviced by, on the average, 200 to 500 slaves, with the largest utilizing over 1,000.

By the 1840s nearly half of the rice eaten in the United States was grown around Georgetown. The local variety, Carolina Gold, gained such popularity that Georgetown exported more rice than any port in the world, an average of 32,000,000 and sometimes as much as 56,000,000 bushels each year. Affluence, of course, came with such success, and the planters and

their families led a life of extreme elegance in plantation mansions. After the crops were harvested, they would journey to equally opulent homes in Charleston, for the "social season" in February. In the summer, they would retreat from the coastal heat to homes on Pawleys Island and Litchfield Beaches, which became, you might say, the first resort area in America. The romantic images of those days, the hallmark of the era, have been recreated in such movies as *Gone With The Wind* and *Old South*.

The scourge of the Civil War physically destroyed much of this lifestyle and the liberation of the slaves sounded the death knell for the rice industry. Vicious hurricanes, in 1893 and in the early 20th century, inflicted much damage to the infrastructure of the fields, and there simply wasn't the manpower available to repair them. Finally, succumbing to the inevitable, the last commercial harvest was brought in just after World War I in 1919.

As they had done in the past, the natural resources of the Georgetown area, abundant forests and plentiful water, came to the economic rescue. Lumber mills took over the inheritance and, by 1914, the Atlantic Coast Lumber Company was the largest producing plant on the East Coast. While that company did not, ultimately, survive the depression of the 1930s, in 1936 the International Paper Company built a factory that, within six years, had become the largest kraft paper mill in the world. With this the management of International Paper took on the responsibility for preservation and renewal of local agricultural forests, which to its credit, thrive still today. So it must be said that, while the factory silhouette does little to improve the skyline of an otherwise charming small town,it has fostered a successful business climate in Georgetown, in concert with commercial fishing and other small industries. Also contributing to the economic and social health of the area in recent years has been an influx of retirees and vacationers who have come to appreciate its charms.

Murrells Inlet, on the Waccamaw Neck, is another place that shouldn't be overlooked. This small fishing village, primarily known as the "Seafood Capital of South Carolina," has a fasci-

nating history. Very early on it was an Indian fishing ground; later it was a port of entry during the Revolutionary and Civil Wars and very often provided a haven for pirates.

Things to Do

The four-by-eight-block grid that comprises the **Historic District**, originally laid out by Elisha Screven and now listed in its entirety on the National Register of Historic Places, is an excellent place to begin. Within the area bounded by Wood, Church, Meeting and Front Streets, the latter running parallel to the Sampit River, there are many fine examples of pre-Civil War homes and public buildings. These clearly reflect the wealth that indigo and rice once brought to this still attractive town.

Most of the homes here are privately owned and not open to the public. An exception is made, however, during two occasions each year. The Women of Prince George Winyah Parish sponsor annual **Plantation Tours** on one Friday and Saturday at the end of March. The year 2000 marked the 53rd anniversary of the tours. Nearby plantation houses that are otherwise out of bounds to visitors are also open at this time. Houses are open from 9:30 am to 5 pm daily, histories and maps are provided with the tickets, trained hostesses are happy to answer any of your questions and visitors are invited to tea at the Winyah Indigo Society Hall each afternoon. In traveling between sites you will be responsible for your own transportation and, in that regard, only cars and vans are allowed due to the low-hanging oak limbs and soft roadbeds. Be advised also that ladies must wear low-heeled shoes – for their own comfort and for the protection of the old floors – and that no photographs may be taken inside the houses. For more information, precise dates and ticket prices, write to Annual Plantation Tours, PO Box 674, Georgetown, SC 29442, or contact Mrs. Perry R. Collins, PO Box 1476, Georgetown, SC 29442, ☎ 843-527-2603. Later in the year, usually the second Saturday in December from 9:30 am to 4:30 pm, the Mental Health Association in Georgetown County sponsors the **Christmas Tour Of Homes**. Contact them directly for details of this event. Write them at MHAGC, PO Box

2097, Georgetown, SC 29442, or, on Monday or Wednesday between 9 and 11 am, reach them by phone at ☎ 843-546-8101.

Another historic place open to visitors is **The Rice Museum**, ☎ 843-546-7423, www.the-strand.com/rice, at the intersection of Front and Screven Streets, by Lafayette Park. Originally built in 1842 on the site of the original wooden market that dated from 1788, the structure has become symbolic of the town by virtue of a distinctive bell tower and clock that was added three years later. Also used as a market during the 18th and 19th centuries, it was on this site that the town council, at the close of the Civil War, surrendered to Federal troops. Since 1970, the building has been dedicated to giving visitors an understanding of the rice and indigo production that brought such wealth to the district. An extension to the museum, Kaminski Hardware next door at 633 Front Street, was built around 1842. On its upper level toward the end of the Civil War, Captain Daggett, a Confederate commander of coastal defenses, built the powder keg torpedo that sank the *Harvest Moon*, the only Federal flagship sunk during that war. Its remnants can still be seen at low tide at Belle Island on Winyah Bay. Presently, the building holds local art exhibitions. The museum complex opens Monday through Saturday from 9:30 am to 4:30 pm, and there is a small admission fee.

Not too far away, on a bluff overlooking the river at 1003 Front Street, you will find the **Kaminski House Museum**, ☎ 843-546-7706. Dating from pre-Revolutionary War times, this has, in its over 200-year history, been home to a wide array of people – including the woman for whom it was built, Magdalene Elizabeth Trapier Keith, the aforementioned Captain Daggett and three of the city's mayors. Among these, Harold Kaminski and his wife Julia, who purchased the house in 1931, took great pride in furnishing their home with a wonderful array of antiques collected by Harold's mother, Rose Baum Kaminski. Upon her death, in 1972, Julia bequeathed the home and grounds to Georgetown, with the proviso that it should become an historic house museum. It is open for tours Monday through Saturday from 10 am to 4 pm and on Sunday from 1 to 4 pm.

Other places of note are the **Prince George Winyah Episcopal Church**, whose congregation was established in 1734. The first service in the present building, constructed of red ballast brick transported from England, was held in 1747. It was occupied by troops during the Revolutionary War when British troops quartered their horses in the box pews, and during the Civil War in which it was badly damaged. When the church was subsequently rebuilt, English stained-glass windows rescued from a decimated plantation chapel were installed.

Just up the road, at 400 Broad Street, is the **Beth Elohim Cemetery**, which was established by South Carolina's second oldest Jewish community around 1772. Although not generally open, you can see from the sidewalk that the older graves, set in the center, face Jerusalem to the east, while the newer ones are laid perpendicular to the cemetery's borders.

On Prince Street, between Orange and King, you will find the **Home of Joseph Hayne Rainey**. In Georgetown, even in pre-Civil War times, slaves could purchase their freedom, and that is what the parents of Joseph Hayne Rainey were able to do. He went on to became a citizen of some prominence and was the first African-American to sit in the House of Representatives, serving from 1870 until 1879.

Not to be missed, either, on the corner of Canon and Prince Streets, is the previously mentioned **Winyah Indigo Society Hall**. Dating from 1857, this housed the society formed in the 1740s to promote indigo.

The best place to learn more about the Historic District is at the **Georgetown Chamber of Commerce**, ☎ 843-546-8436, 800-777-7705 or www.myrtlebeachlive.com/tidelands. They are at at Front and King Streets, open 9 am to 5 pm daily, and you can pick up some very informative brochures here.

Few will want to leave Georgetown without exploring the many shops and restaurants dotted along Front Street. Quite enjoyable also is a stroll along the 1,100-foot boardwalk, known as the **Harborwalk**, which runs alongside the Sampit River.

To get a better perspective of the ecological system in this area, the Tidelands of Georgetown, contact **Black River Expedi-**

tions, ☎ 843-546-4840, at 21 Garden Avenue, Georgetown, just three miles north of town on Highway 701. They operate a Naturalist-Guided Half-day Tour, taking four hours and costing $40 per person, in an easily manageable, stable river kayak. You will travel through the cypress-tupelo swamps, old hand-dug canals and open waterways, passing a variety of wildlife, including ducks, owls, alligators, and numerous birds. If you are very fortunate, you may catch sight of bald eagles, wood storks, the elusive swamp canary or a few sea turtles. From mid-April to Labor Day, there is an Evening Tour, which lasts just 1½ hours and costs $15 per person.

It is natural in such a setting for thoughts to turn to fishing. For those so inclined, we are happy to introduce **Salt Marsh Guides**, ☎ 843-650-4469, owned and operated by Captain Jim Gnozzio, an Orvis-certified guide and the only USCG-Licensed guide between Little River and Georgetown. He pilots a 1997 118-foot DuraCraft backwater flats boat equipped with state of the art electronics and fishing tackle, and he specializes in shallow water fishing on the waters of Murrells Inlet, Winyah Bay, and the Sampit and Waccamaw rivers. According to the season, you will be in search of flounder, winter trout, Spanish or king mackerel, black drum, bluefish, spots, sharks, spot tail bass, freshwater bass or catfish. Trips of approximately five hours cost $155 for one person and $185 for two. If, however, you fancy simply a scenic or photo-op trip, Captain Jim will accommodate up to four people at $30 per hour.

Murrells Inlet, described on pages 364-65, is an old fishing village that exudes its own charm and is worth a visit just to partake of the fresh seafood at one of the many restaurants. Also, nearby and open seven days a week is **Huntington Beach State Park**, ☎ 843-237-4440, www.prt.state.sc.us/sc, a hidden paradise in its own right. Among its many attractions is a 500-foot-long, handicapped-accessible boardwalk, which serves equally well as a platform for crabbing or wildlife observation. If you are a bird fancier, this is definitely the place to be, with over 280 species having been recorded in the park. Swimmers will enjoy one of the state's best beaches, where shells – including the official state shell, known as the Lettered Olive –

and sharks' teeth can often be found. Stay out of the water, though, when you venture near the freshwater lagoon, unless you want a face-to-face meeting with one of the resident alligators. A series of programs and activities will bring the natural phenomena and Lowcountry history to life. These are held daily, with some scheduled for the evening hours, but we would suggest you contact the park before you set out to see if there is one that suits your tastes. Don't forget, either, historic **Atalaya**, where Anna Hyatt Huntington created many of her famous works, most of which are to be found in Brookgreen Gardens, just across Route 17 from the park.

Brookgreen Gardens owes its existence to intellectual and philanthropist Archer Huntington (1870-1955) – heir of late 19th-century transportation multi-millionaire Collis P. Huntington, and his wife, Anna Hyatt Huntington (1876-1973) – who, both prior to their marriage 1923 and afterwards, was a sculptress of no little renown. In 1930, for the sake of Anna's health, they traveled to the South Carolina Lowcountry in search of a suitable property. In fact, they found four, which, together, comprised 9,000 acres situated between the Waccamaw River and the Atlantic Ocean. Brookgreen, Laurel Hill, Springfield and the Oaks had been thriving rice plantations up until the time of the Civil War, but had since fallen into a state of disrepair.

Envisioning a quiet retreat from life's hectic pace, they set about fashioning a sanctuary where monumental works of art could be displayed within a sculpture garden that would be etched out of this natural wonderland. They used a magnificent alley of 200-year-old live oaks as the centerpiece for a butterfly-shaped plan of informal, connecting gardens, thus creating a 300-acre natural gallery, the first public sculpture garden in the United States.

Brookgreen's theme became American figurative sculpture, including human and animal forms, and was committed, in principle, to a naturalistic style. Not surprisingly, the works of Anna Hyatt Huntington, then recognized as one of the premier women sculptors in the world, are the most numerous, but, from the gallery's inception, the Huntington's acquired works

by their artistic friends and other leading artists of the period, with the concentration being on works from about 1880 forward. Since the Huntingtons' deaths, the collection has been steadily increased, always providing that additions kept to the figurative tradition. In fact, some of the earlier works now on display are the more recent acquisitions. Today, there are even several pieces from the Neoclassical style, a school in the earliest traditions of American sculpture, which had its beginnings around 1825. Interestingly, American Neoclassicists, in pursuit of their art, left the United States to live in Italy. There they studied the great collections, were able to obtain beautiful white marble from local quarries, and found models willing to pose in the nude, all of which were unavailable in their homeland.

Brookgreen's sculpture collection now exceeds 700 pieces, created by nearly 250 of the most influential figurative American artists of the last 130 years. You will excuse us, please, if we forego description of the works in detail. We will, however, say that embodied within this gallery garden is a stunningly colorful and kaleidoscopic juxtaposition of art and nature. The plant collection, worthy of attention in its own right, includes approximately 2,000 species and subspecies of plants, both native and adapted to the Southeastern United States.

Brookgreen Gardens is, in addition, a wildlife sanctuary protected by the laws of South Carolina. As it is situated along the Atlantic Flyway, the variety of feathered visitors is especially wide during the spring and fall migrations. As many as 194 species of birds have been spotted here. The Wildlife Park has 50 acres open to the public and includes the **Cypress Aviary**, inhabited by snowy egrets, night herons, white ibis and other species; the **Raptor Aviary**, with birds of prey; an otter pond; an alligator swamp; a fox and raccoon glade; and a white-tailed deer savannah.

Brookgreen Gardens, on the National Register of Historic Places and, since 1992, designated a National Historic Landmark, offers a number of educative, informative and enjoyable programs throughout the year, many of which are free.

Our Suggestion: Schedule your trip here for a Sunday and avail yourselves of a 50-minute Tour on the Springfield*, a 48-foot pontoon boat. This excursion explores the freshwater creeks and abandoned rice fields at Brookgreen and introduces visitors to the rich animal environment of the Waccamaw River, including reptiles, amphibians, birds, mammals and insects. You might also catch a glimpse of the very unusual star-shaped chimney of the old Laurel Hill Rice Mill, which soars 100 feet above the banks of the Waccamaw.*

If you decide to visit on a weekend between Thanksgiving and January 1st, or on any day during Christmas Week, you are in for a treat indeed. At those times, seated in a very romantic horse-drawn carriage, you will be regaled with the guide's tales of daily plantation life and holiday traditions. The rides conclude at the Old Kitchen, where a glowing fire and a glass of warm cider await you.

Brookgreen Gardens is open daily, with the exception of Christmas Day, from 9:30 am to 4:45 pm. During special summer hours between mid-June and early September, it is open from 9:30 am to 4:45 pm on Sunday and Monday and 9:30 am until dark, Tuesday through Saturday.

Sweet Dreams

Georgetown

Alexandra's Inn, ☎ 843-527-0233, 888-557-0233, fax 520-0718, www.alexandrasinn.com, 620 Prince Street, is in the heart of Georgetown on a property that dates from the 1880s. A comprehensive renovation has restored the home to the style of that era, with pine floors, 11-foot ceilings and a fireplace in each room. The hosts, Sandy (Alexandra) and Rob Kempe, see their home as resembling Tara, the home of Scarlett in *Gone*

with the Wind, and have named each of the five guest rooms after a character in that story and decorated them to match. Rhett's Room and Scarlett's Room, the former with a king-sized cherry sleigh bed and the latter with a queen-sized mahogany pencil point four-poster bed, each have a Jacuzzi tub and rent for $135 and $120, respectively. Melanie's Room has a king-sized cherry rice bed and costs $120 a night. Ashley's Room and Bonnie's Room feature queen-sized beds and rent for $95 each. If you are looking for a little more space, then ask for the Carriage House Suite, with two bedrooms, living room, dining room, full kitchen and a two-person whirlpool bath. The tariff for the suite is $165 per night or, if you opt for the Honeymoon Package that includes a bottle of champagne, crackers and fruit on the first night, that will be $195. Each room has private bath, cable TV and telephone. There is a spacious pool on-site; and a sumptuous breakfast will await you each morning.

The **Mansfield Plantation Bed & Breakfast Country Inn**, ☎ 843-546-6961, 800-355-3223, fax 546-6961, Route 8, Box 590, Highway 701 North, www.mansfieldplantation.com, is just five miles from the center of Georgetown. It offers an intriguing combination of accommodations and activities. Situated on the Black River and surrounded by a naturalist's paradise of 900 private acres, the stage is aptly set as guests approach this 275-year-old plantation house via an avenue of Spanish moss-draped live oaks flanked by slave cabins. Inside, in true antebellum style, visitors can experience the charms of a bygone era, whether simply relaxing in the parlor or partaking of a delicious breakfast each morning. The accommodations themselves are housed in three separate and historic guesthouses. Each of the eight rooms features private entrance, classical décor, fireplace and full private bath and rents for between $95 and $115 a night.

The grounds provide an ideal retreat from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. You can swing in a hammock imagining castles in the clouds above or walk hand-in-hand through the grounds, where you are sure to make the acquaintance of ducks, geese, a variety of small birds, and deer. Be very careful,

though, if you venture onto the pier, not to disturb the alligators or fish. And, if you have arranged a kayak expedition with Black River Expeditions (see the *Things to Do* section), your guide will even bring a kayak to pick you up at the Mansfield Inn's private dock.

Duck hunting, too, is an option, at least during the season that runs for four days over Thanksgiving and 46 days between early December and late January. During that period, **Mansfield Duck Hunting Club**, for a fee of $225, will take you on an excursion where you get to keep what you shoot. Just imagine – at the close of your weekend you may be able to stock your freezer with duck and fish.

Mansfield Plantation, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, has been called "the most architecturally intact plantation in Georgetown County." It is also, without doubt, a charming and delightful place to spend a romantic weekend.

The **King's Inn at Georgetown**, ☎/fax 843-527-6937, 800-251-8805, e-mail kingsinres@aol.com and www.bbonline.com/sc/kingsinn, is located at 230 Broad Street. Benjamin King, the prominent owner of Georgetown Rice Mill, erected this four-square Federal-style house in 1825, and it served as his residence until he died in 1854. It 1857, the property was deeded by King's trustee to Samuel T. Atkinson, a politically prominent citizen who would become a delegate to the Secession Convention. It was he who commissioned the addition of distinctive double piazzas across the front of the house, and adorned the interior with elaborate plaster moldings and ceiling medallions. Such grandeur, though, is not easily overlooked by one's enemies. As one of the largest and most modern in Georgetown, the home was sequestered by the Union forces' commander, who used it as home and headquarters during the Civil War. Subsequent to that conflict, it was the Elks' home, then a boarding house prior to its purchase in 1926 by Mrs. Lyde Whitton, who enclosed the back porches for apartments. The Prince George Episcopal Church procured the property in 1962 for use as offices and Sunday school rooms, selling it to a private owner 26 years later.

The present owners, Marilyn and Jerry Burkhardt, envisioned the old home as a magnificent bed & breakfast and acquired it for that purpose in October of 1993. They set about filling the 7,000-square-foot mansion with antiques, heirlooms and reproduction period pieces, not forgetting to add in late 20th-century amenities. What you will find today are seven delightful, designer-decorated guest rooms with four-poster bed reproductions – from twin to king-sized and private baths. One room, Linens 'N Lace, features a Jacuzzi tub for two. Rates are $89 to $139 per night, including a multi-course gourmet breakfast, turndown service, and use of plush terry robes. You will wake to the scent of fresh-brewed coffee just outside your door and, in the afternoon, tea and sherry are served. Rounding out the altogether graceful ambiance are several gorgeous parlors and an art gallery, warming fireplaces and original heart pine floors. Adding a splash of outdoor fun are a lap pool, croquet lawn, and bicycles.

Pawleys Island

The **Litchfield Plantation – A Country Inn Resort**, ☎ 843-237-9121, 800-869-1410, fax 237-1041, www.litchfieldplantation.com, PO Box 290, Pawleys Island, is a member of the Small Luxury Hotels of the World group. In fact, according to a recent Zagat survey, the Litchfield Plantation was given the highest rating of "excellent," qualifying it for the "Top 50 US Inns and B&Bs" list. On 600 acres of a 1750s South Carolina coastal rice plantation, this extraordinary retreat offers every facility possible for the most romantic of weekends. Entering the grounds through imposing wrought iron gates and passing along a 250-year-old avenue of Spanish moss-draped live oaks you will be fascinated. And, with your first glimpse of the historic Plantation Manor House, you will be enchanted. One of the oldest of the Waccamaw River rice plantations, it was built by the Simons family on King's Grant land in the 1740s and, at that time, consisted of over 1,900 acres that stretched from the river to the

oceanfront. These days, though reduced in acreage, Litchfield is the only original plantation mansion on the Waccamaw that still faces a live oak avenue. It has also been transformed, although still keeping the ambiance of a more genteel and gracious era, into a thoroughly modern resort.

The interior décor throughout is elegant, classical and conservative. In addition to public areas, there are 32 guest rooms, many in two- or three-bedroom villas spread across the property. Romantic weekenders, though, will definitely want to request one of the four suites in the Plantation House proper. Two of these, the Ballroom Suite and the Gun Room, are classified as Estate Suites; the other two, the Blue Room and the Red Room, are Junior Suites. Of these, undoubtedly, the Ball Room Suite, all 1,200 square feet of it, is the perfect place for your special weekend. Its second floor location affords a 260° vista over the plantation grounds that includes the Avenue of Live Oaks, the enticing swimming pool and masts of the sailboats en route on the Intracoastal Waterway. There is a large living room area with a fireplace, sleeping quarters with a comfortable king-sized four-poster bed, and a bathroom with oversized whirlpool tub for two and adjoining glass enclosed shower. Depending upon the season, high or low, the cost for this is $450 or $360, respectively. The Gun Room suite on the first floor is decorated with leather and wood and features a queen-sized canopied bed, sitting room, fireplace and a full- as well as a separate half-bath. The rate is $300 or $376 per night, depending upon the season. The second-floor Blue Room features a king-sized rice bed, sitting area with fireplace and views over the historic rice fields. With an ambiance derived from a curious blend of Oriental and South Carolina Lowcountry styles, the Red Room has a queen-sized bed, fireplace and views over the rice fields. These two Junior Suites cost $166 or $202 a night, according to season.

The Guest House at Litchfield Plantation is an 8,250-square-foot brick and stucco mansion surrounded by lovely courtyards and patios and located beside a natural pool. It has a 17x35-foot living room with a grand piano, a formal dining room that seats 12, and other communal rooms such as a library, bar room, kitchen and breakfast area. It also houses six guest rooms, including another Estate Suite, the Executive Suite, which features a massive writing desk and a sitting area with fireplace. The rate for the suite is $280 or $350 per night and the five Deluxe Rooms rent for $154 or $194 per night, again, depending upon the season. No matter your choice of guest room, you will enjoy a private bath, cable TV and a voice message/data port telephone.

Our Suggestion: Consider the Romantic Getaway package, based on three nights in the room of your choice. Prices, per person, are $471 in the low season or $545 in the high season for an Estate Suite, $429 or $487 for a Junior Suite, and $413 or $471 for a Deluxe Room. Included are a full Plantation breakfast each day in the dining room of the Carriage House Club, a four-course Candlelight Dinner nightly, a bottle of champagne – the genuine French article – on arrival, and a romantic flower bouquet in your room. If time and/or finances are constrictive, then opt for two nights, and the Litchfield Plantation will prorate the cost.

There is much more to recommend the Litchfield Plantation than its guest rooms, however. The Carriage House Club presents distinctive, gourmet Lowcountry and Continental cuisine prepared by an award-winning chef, and an equally impressive wine list. The large free-form heated pool complex features a cabana that provides comfortable changing facilities; and two tennis courts are adjacent to the Carriage House Club. In addi-

tion there is a private freshwater marina, linked to the Intracoastal Waterway, which is home to the plantation's 56-foot yacht, *Arbitrage II*. Just a short distance away from the mansion and on the oceanfront is the Beach Club House – a three-story contemporary structure of glass and bleached cypress with dressing areas and showers on the ground floor, a second floor breezeway with kitchen facilities for enjoying a casual bring-your-own lunch or dinner, and a classier third floor, which may be reserved for special occasions.

The Litchfield Plantation is proud of its Concierge and Guest Center services, where trained, knowledgeable and well-connected staff can obtain tickets for Myrtle Beach shows, reserve seats at a restaurant or book activities such as horseback riding, golf, hunting guides or deep water fishing expeditions.

Ghosts are more than just an apparition in the Georgetown Tidelands. In fact, they are an institution, and the Litchfield Plantation has its very own. Dr. Henry Massingbred Tucker, a prior owner of the property, was often summoned from his sleep to answer late night calls. Upon his return he would ring the plantation gatehouse bell with his riding crop for admittance. Once inside the house, so as not to disturb his family, he used a small circular back staircase to get to his room. Shortly following his death, during a stormy night, the bell on the gatehouse started to ring, as though being tapped by the good doctor's riding crop. This happened so continuously, and robbed the owners of so many nights sleep, that they had the bell removed. It appears, however, that the ghost of Dr. Tucker was not discouraged, as he is often seen on the back staircase he built, and in his room.

Pawleys Pier Village, ☎ 843-237-4220 or fax 237-9874, Pawleys Island, has a delightful location on the oceanfront surrounded by the 18th-century ambiance of the oldest beach resort on the East Coast. It has 54 two- and three-bedroom condominiums furnished in an elegantly modern style and each equipped with kitchen, washer/dryer, and private balcony overlooking a large pool and the Atlantic Ocean. Look for elevator service, covered parking, security system, linen service, maid service upon departure, and a private pier that crosses

the pristine sands and stretches into the blue Atlantic waters. Unfortunately for romantic weekenders, during most of the year, rentals are by the week only. If, however, you are planning a trip in the off-season – and that can sometimes be as attractive as the summer – give Pawleys Pier Village a call, inquire about weekend vacancies, and ask for a rate.

Tables for Two

Georgetown

The **Rice Paddy**, ☎ 843-546-2021 or fax 546-0211, 819 Front Street, has a new location on Georgetown's waterfront and a reputation as one of the area's finest restaurants. Appetizers include Deep-Fried Bacon-Wrapped Oysters ($5.95); Linguine with Country Ham, Sun-Dried Tomatoes and Cream ($6.95) and Goat Cheese Croustades with Tapenade and Smoked Salmon ($5.50). Interesting entrées are Mustard-Coated Grouper with Herbed Cream Sauce ($18.95); Roast Rack of Lamb Moutarde ($20.95); and Pan-Fried Quail with Country Ham Cream and Grits ($17.95). The Rice Paddy is open for lunch Monday through Saturday from 1:30 am to 2:30 pm and for dinner on the same days between 6 and 10 pm. Reservations are suggested.

The **River Room Restaurant**, ☎ 843-527-4110, is located at 801 Front Street on the Boardwalk. It has river views, a decidedly casual atmosphere and a reputation for serious seafood – particularly chargrilled fish. South Carolina Shrimp and Grits, sautéed local shrimp, smoked sausage and a light pork sauces over locally ground yellow grits; and Oysters Rockefeller, fresh oysters topped with chopped herbed spinach and hollandaise ($5.95 each) are appetizers worthy of a tasting. If pasta is your thing, you will want to consider Bubba Gump Shrimp, served over pasta; or Shrimp and Scallops, with clam sauce ($14.95 each). Seafood entrées – sautéed, grilled or otherwise – include McClellanville Crab Cakes, jumbo lump crab meat picked in McClellanville, molded into twin crab cakes, lightly sautéed and served with a spicy remoulade

($15.95); or Shrimp and Scallop Tasso, shrimp and scallops sautéed with thinly sliced Cajun tasso, mushrooms and scallions ($14.95). Look, also, for tempting fried fresh seafood platters ($14.95 to $16.95), and a variety of chicken, pork and steak dishes ($12.95 to $18.95). The River Room is open Monday through Saturday, with lunch served from 11 am to 2:30 pm and dinner served from 5 to 10 pm.

Pawley's Island

Frank's Restaurant, ☎ 843-237-1581, on Highway 17 "at the red light" was once a grocery store, but has graduated to prepared food. Expect dinner by candlelight in an intimate setting with a comfortable ambiance. Now that is romantic! The menu changes weekly, but has been known to include appetizers such as Crisp Shrimp and Wild Mushroom Risotto Cake, with tomato and basil cream sauce ($7.25); Fresh McClellanville Littleneck Clams, baked with bacon, garlic and herb butter, fresh bread crumbs and parmesan cheese ($6.95); and Spinach Salad, with Belgian endive, prosciutto ham and warm Brie toasts ($6.95). On our last visit, entrées on offer were Grilled Swordfish on Fried Spinach, drizzled with Cabernet glaze ($16.95); Duck Two Ways, grilled breast of duck and preserved duck served with a fried grits cake and wild mushroom jus ($15.50); and Mustard-Crusted Rack of New Zealand Spring Lamb, roasted and served with mango and mint chutney and garlic mashed potatoes ($19.50). Grilled dishes are prepared over oak on a wood-burning grill. The wine list is extensive. Numerous bottles of domestic and French reds and whites, a sprinkling of vintages from Australia, Germany, Italy and Spain and many interesting champagnes are, for the most part, reasonably priced. Frank's is open for dinner, Monday through Saturday from 6 to 10 pm, with the bar opening two hours earlier.

Murrells Inlet

There are restaurants in abundance here, with one on almost every block. As they are predominantly seafood specialists, the

choice is yours to make. We'd like to recommend one that, to our minds, stands out from its cohorts.

Bovine's Wood Fired Specialties, ☎ 843-651-2888, 3979 Highway 17 Business, Murrells Inlet, with pretty water views, is different indeed. Appetizers, priced at $3.95 to $7.95, may include Whole Roasted Garlic, whole cloves roasted to perfection, served with herb infused olive oil, or Cajun Chicken Egg Rolls, hand-rolled egg rolls stuffed with blackened chicken, roasted peppers, corn and mixed cheeses, served with peach and Creole mustard dipping sauce. Only aged Angus beef and the freshest fish are used in the entrées. Cooked on the wood-fired grill using mesquite and charcoal for a truly unique flavoring, these range from $13.95 to $21.95. The house specialties are Jambalaya, traditional Cajun stew with shrimp, chicken, andouille sausage, okra and peppers over red beans and rice; and Blackened Lamb Chops, seasoned with blackened spices, pan-seared and served with goat cheese and jalapeño jelly. For a more casual meal, specialty pizzas emerge piping hot and temptingly aromatic from Bovine's famous custom-built brick oven, which burns oak and mesquite for flavoring. These Italian delights are priced at $6.95 to $8.95.

Garden City

The **Gulfstream Café**, ☎ 843-651-8808 or fax 357-2675, 1536 South Waccamaw Drive, is the only one on the Grand Strand with a view of the Atlantic Ocean on one side and Murrell's Inlet on the other. This is a pleasant place to share cocktails and conversation – at the upstairs bar or, perhaps, seated on the deck while enjoying nightly live entertainment. Before diving into the main course, consider Oysters Rockefeller, Tallmadge Bros. farm-raised blue points with creamed spinach, bacon, hollandaise and grated parmesan ($8.95); or Firecracker Prawns, six fried shrimp in chipotle pepper cream sauce ($6.95). Seafood entrées predominate, with enticing choices such as Seafood Cioppino, shrimps, scallops, oysters, fish and New Zealand green-lipped mussels with cappellini pasta in a light white wine, herb, garlic and tomato-flavored seafood broth ($16.50); and Original Colossal Alaskan King Crab Legs, served

with mixed vegetable medley and a salt-rubbed baked potato ($25). Other tastes are accommodated with chicken, duck, lamb and steak dishes that range from $13.75 to $22.50. Opening hours are 4 to 10 pm, Tuesday through Thursday, with the closing hour extended a half-hour later on Friday and Saturday evenings.

Shops, Spas, etc.

On the subject of flowers, we were sufficiently impressed and enticed while researching the Georgetown area to forego a traditional florist in favor of a more novel suggestion. Five miles or so south of Georgetown, on Route 17, is a sign that will direct you to the **Roycroft Daylily Nursery**, ☎ 843-527-1533, 800-950-5459, fax 546-2281, e-mail rdn@sccoast.net and www.roycroftdaylilies.com, 942 White Hall Avenue, Georgetown, SC 29440. There you will marvel at the wide and kaleidoscopic array of daylilies. Those not familiar with the glorious species *Hemerocallis* will learn that these are not bulbs, as commonly assumed, but herbaceous perennials; and that, although each bloom lasts only a day (hence, the name), the plants produce a succession of flowers over a long period during midsummer. Given proper attention, this gift will remain as a lovely living reminder of your special time together when the blooms of the most resilient roses would have faded to a memory. If you want to know more, check out the American Hemerocallis Society on the web at www.daylilies.org/daylilies.html. When you are ready to select your daylily, you may need some input from the gardening experts on hand as to which daylilies will flourish in your garden's climate and soil. Price, too, will be a consideration; while some are as low as $35 (less than the cost of a dozen roses), the rarer colors and varieties can cost as much as $260. Still, it is a pleasant dilemma as the flowers, one and all, are spectacular.

Seafood lovers know that the fresher the catch, the tastier the dish. So, why not extend your romantic celebration once back home with a delicious seafood dinner. On your way out of town, stop by **Murrells Inlet Shrimp & Fish Co.**, ☎ 843-651-1730

or fax 651-2027, Murrells Inlet, where the owner, Rick Baumann, likes to boast that all of his seafood was swimming just the day before. Whatever you fancy he has on hand, including the spices and sauces to embellish it.

Greenville & Western Upcountry

The splendid geographical features of Upcountry South Carolina seem to be a well-kept secret. And, as no well known cities have developed in the region, its many treasures and those of its largest city, Greenville, are often overlooked.

History

History has been a major contributing factor to this obscurity. Richard Pearis, an Irishman via Virginia, settled in this area in 1770. Subsequently, in 1773, a son, George, who was borne to him by his Cherokee wife, deeded him 150,000 acres. This son had received the land from three Cherokee headmen. The native Cherokee hunters fiercely protected their hunting grounds here, however, fully withstanding the unwelcome tide of white settlers until 1755. In fact, Indian wars ravaged the area, on and off, until the late summer/early fall of 1776 when the South Carolina militia so decimated the Cherokee forces that the natives surrendered all of their lands to the state. Indeed, in 1776, when Charleston, 300 miles away on the South Carolina coast, had been established for a century, Greenville was not even on the map of South Carolina.

Following the end of the Revolutionary War, settlers, primarily of Scotch, Scotch-Irish and English descent, migrated from Pennsylvania south along the Great Wagon Road. Establishing their new homes in Upcountry South Carolina, they made their livelihood by farming and trading. In three successive years, not long after their arrival, the citizenry founded the Lebanon Methodist Church (1785), the Fairview Presbyterian Church (1786) and the Reedy River Baptist Church (1787). Thus began a long period of dominance by these three religious groups in the lifestyle of the Upcountry. Also in 1786, the new county of Greenville was formed. The name, it is believed, was derived from General Nathaniel Greene, a commander under George Washington for the Southern department. Thirteen years later, however, the State Assembly abolished the county and reorganized it as a district.

The early 19th century saw a proliferation of industry throughout the region, in particular the textile industry. During this era, also, Greenville and the surrounding area became a popular resort for wealthy plantation owners of the Lowcountry seeking to escape the malaria-infected heat of the coast. They built numerous fine properties, many of which remain today,

and brought with them their love of culture and elegance. Among the more prominent residents was Joel Poinsett, Secretary of War and Ambassador to Mexico. He is remembered today for the cultivation at his home of a plant he had brought back from the Caribbean – the Poinsettia.

In 1851, higher education came to Greenville in the form of Furman University and the first railroad reached Greenville just one year later. Although Greenville supplied goods to the Confederate Army and hosted a Confederate hospital, it was spared the more violent aspects of the Civil War. The only military action the town saw was a raid by Stoneman's Cavalry in May of 1865.

The General Assembly upgraded Greenville to city classification in 1869, a status which lasted until 1907 when the city surrendered its charter in exchange for incorporation. During the intervening period the textile industry went from strength to strength in Greenville County, with workers for the mills being recruited from the mountains of North Carolina and Georgia. The city welcomed the first Southern Textile Exposition in 1915, and Textile Hall was built to house the second that was held in 1917. It was at that time that Greenville called itself the "Textile Center of the South," a designation that was later ambitiously aggrandized to the "Textile Center of the World." By the 1950s this industry was clearly in decline. The fact, however, did not daunt the spirit of Greenville. Changing strategy, it began to market itself, and very successfully, as a site for international businesses. Today, more than 185 foreign businesses, most notably BMW, make their American home in the Greenville, Spartanburg, Anderson area – most along the I-85 corridor. The rewards brought to Greenville and the surrounding Upstate area as a result of this influx are both commercial and aesthetic. Commercially, the region has gained recognition as a major engineering center. Aesthetically, there is a surprising degree of sophistication and cultural awareness.

The rest of the Upstate area, bounded by North Carolina on the north and by Georgia on the west and southwest, is also worth investigating. This natural paradise, enhanced by crystal clear lakes and majestic mountains, provides a tranquil contrast to

the City of Greenville. Whether you prefer the peaceful outdoor pursuits of the country or the more urbane delights of the city, you will find something to suit you on a romantic weekend here. Stay in the city and visit the country; stay in the country and visit the city; stay in one or the other and stay put – you and your partner decide.

Things to Do

Among the highlights of Greenville is its delightful **Main Street**. This city center has been rejuvenated, with a vibrant and thriving downtown area adaptable for multiple uses. While a number of cities have converted downtown thoroughfares into a pedestrian malls, Greenville chose a different approach. They incorporated a pedestrian orientation without sacrificing vehicular traffic. In other words, the four-lane road with parallel parking was metamorphosed into a two-lane road that allows free parking at an angle to the street. The scene from a driver's vantage point is not unattractive and it is striking when explored on foot. Indeed, wide sidewalks lined by shady trees, open plazas and splashing fountains provide an ambiance more typically European than American.

The rise of the Hyatt Regency Greenville, at an important junction of Main Street, paved the way for further redevelopment. Seizing this opportunity, the city embarked upon an historic preservation plan that listed four commercial and residential downtown neighborhoods on the National Register of Historic Places. In 1990, history met modern culture with the inauguration of the $47 million Peace Center for Performing Arts. Between 1992 and 1996, sagacious entrepreneurs, discerning the trend, opened 32 new restaurants. In addition to more than doubling the number of dining options, what continues to evolve is a surprising diversity of ethnic eateries and culinary styles. This can be attributed, in large part, to opportunities presented and demands brought by the immigration of international business interests into the Greenville area.

Main Street has become home to a variety of inviting specialty stores and galleries, such as the amazing Ilyn Strong gallery that is described at length in the *Shops, Spas, etc.* section. To keep things lively, the **Piazza Bergamo**, halfway along Main Street and named after Greenville's sister city in Italy, hosts **Downtown Alive**, which sponsors free open-air concerts at various times throughout the year. And, to our minds, very few events can compare to the holiday celebrations held here during the first weekend in December. Families flock to see the **Festival of Trees** displayed in the Hyatt Regency atrium and, on Saturday evening, young and old alike are entranced by the wondrous sights and reverberating sounds of the Main Street Christmas Parade.

One, more subtle, point bears mention before moving on. Whether strolling the streets or as part of the crowd, you will be pleasantly struck, as we were, by the harmonious relationship between the races in what is a very Southern town. Indeed, we were interested to learn that South Carolina ranks second only to Maryland in having the highest percentage of African-American-owned businesses and firms relative to the population percentage. Several famous African-Americans have been born in and around Greenville. These include Sara Reese – a world-famous opera soprano – and Clayton "Peg Leg" Bates – a one-legged vaudeville artist who made 21 appearances on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. Arguably the most famous, however, is Jesse Jackson, who was both the first black and the first Greenvillian to seek the Democratic Party nomination for the Presidency of the United States.

The stated aim of the Main Street area's well-thought-out and executed revitalization plan was that "by the year 2000 Greenville will have a thriving downtown which is recognized nationally as an example of a 'state of the art' community in which to live work and play and which serves in itself as a national attraction." A visit here will happily confirm that its designers have hit their mark.

Continuing on, between Main Street and the WestEnd, is an historic area of a different ilk. The **Reedy River District,** once called "The Cradle of Greenville," nourished the city's be-

ginnings and, in fact, was the first permanent settlement in Greenville. Today, after decades of neglect, this district is an oasis of calm in the heart of downtown. We suggest you get a copy of the brochure "Reedy River Falls Historic Park," and follow its self-guided walking tour through four sections, past 13 historic markers and to the two falls in the river.

Our next stop is the **WestEnd** – a district that, in the 1890s, was commercially prominent and so full of hustle and bustle that it was called "Greenville's Second Downtown." In reality, it can't quite claim that honor these days. It is, nevertheless, an interesting area. Its centerpiece is the **WestEnd Market**, which had its 1890 origins within the Alliance Cotton Warehouse and, in 1994, was meticulously restored into a public market place. It functions, once again, as a genuine farmers' market featuring temptingly fresh produce and attracting vendors from across the Upstate area. Under the same roof and on the Augusta Street level, you will find the Atrium Shops, offering distinctive gifts, art work and craft items. Among these is the **Milltown Emporium**, which carries an amazing collection of goods and is featured in the *Shops, Spas, etc.* section. On the lower floor, **Artists Underground** features studios where you may observe artists working or, at times, giving classroom instruction. In addition, the **WestEnd Market** plays host to a montage of events – most notably, the Irish Festival (held, as you might, imagine, on St. Patrick's Day) and the Old World Christmas Celebration. More regularly, during the Spring, Summer and Fall seasons, WestEnd Thursday and WestEnd Saturday at the Market present a showplace of art, music, food and fun for the young and the young-at-heart.

Just around the corner is a store that offers whatever you may need to transform your farmers' market purchases into a gourmet feast. The **Cook's Station**, ☎ 864-250-0091, voice-mail 232-4691 or fax 250-0095, at 659 S. Main Street, has three rooms that are jam-packed with kitchen paraphernalia. You will find freestanding wooden butcher blocks, all manner of pots and pans to cook in, and stoves to cook on. Food preparation accessories include an impressive selection of knives – including Henckels Swiss Cutlery and the Swiss Tool (the latest

innovation from Victorinox), Cusinart electrical appliances, including programmable toasters, fondue pots, orange and citrus presses; a wide range of NorPro products, such as steamers, onion keepers and cherry stoners; and a comprehensive selection of books and CDs. The owners of the Cook's Station realize, too, the importance of presentation. They carry, among other things, silver and pewter serving pieces, Alaska Forest Creation wooden bowls, salad servers, cheese platters, attractive glassware, herb juice holders, an array of coffee/tea pots, and salt and pepper shakers in all shapes and sizes. Finally, you will certainly find many nifty things in their well-stocked wine accessory corner.

While you know, from reading the above, that Greenville boasts a high degree of cultural awareness, you will, no doubt, be surprised to learn that it is home to a preeminent collection of Baroque religious art. Indeed, the **Bob Jones University Art Collection**, ☎ 864-242-5100, www.bju.edu/art.gallery, at 1700 Wade Hampton Boulevard, is one of the most important collections of religious art in America. It rivals those found at more likely sites in France, Italy, Spain and Portugal. Within its 30 galleries you can admire European sacred art from the 13th to 19th centuries, including important works by such major artists as Rembrandt, Titian, Murillo and Rubens. In fascinating contrast is the **Bowen Bible Lands Collection**; an expansive and intriguing exhibition of Russian icons; a collection of European furniture (that has been called the finest in America by Joseph Aronson, author of *The Encyclopedia of Furniture*) and a display of vestments designed for the Imperial Chapel in Vienna. The museum is open, without charge, Tuesday through Sunday from 2 to 5 pm. When planning your visit, keep in mind that this is a sacred place; hence, as in many European Cathedrals, modest dress is a prerequisite to entry and no cameras are permitted.

Art of a more contemporary, and often more colorful, nature is found in the center of town at the **Greenville County Museum of Art**, ☎ 864-2271-7570, 420 College Street. Blossoming from its modest beginnings as a small gallery in the 1930s, the history of American art is chronicled here today

within four full floors of exhibitions. The journey begins with Colonial portraits from the early 18th century, and includes at least one work representative of each succeeding movement in American Art, including an unequaled number of Southern paintings. These permanent exhibits are augmented, throughout the year, by traveling exhibits that continually rotate. These may have as their focus a particular artist or period in art history or they may feature a sampling of the work of the most original contemporary artists. The opening hours are Tuesday through Saturday 10 am to 5 pm and Sunday 1 to 5 pm. Attractive gifts can be found in the Museum shop.

If the performing arts appeal to you both, Greenville offers two noteworthy options. The aforementioned **Peace Center for the Performing Arts**, ☎ 864-467-3000, 800-888-7768, fax 467-3040, at 300 S. Main Street, is a multi-faceted cultural and special events complex. It is comprised of a 2,100-seat concert hall, a 400-seat theater, a 200-seat cabaret, and a 1,500-seat amphitheater and is considered the place to go for symphony, ballet, opera or a Broadway show. You may also want to check out what's on offer at the dramatic new **BI-LO CENTER**, ☎ 864-241-3800, located a few minutes from Main Street at 650 North Academy Street. Home to the Greenville Grrrowl ice hockey team of the ECHL, this facility can be adapted to accommodate between 5,000 and 16,000 patrons, according to the event.

For more information about Greenville and the surrounding area contact either of the following:

- **Greater Greenville Convention & Visitors Bureau**, on the 5th Floor, City Hall, 206 South Main Street, Greenville, SC 29603, ☎ 864-421-000, 800-351-7180, fax 421-0005, e-mail meet@greatergreenville.com, www.greatergreenville.com.
- **Downtown Visitors Center**, ☎ 864-233-0461, 800-717-0023, in the City Hall Lobby. The latter is open Monday to Friday 8:30 am to 5 pm.

The Upcountry region has a rich historic tradition as well. Greenville proper encompasses five historic districts with

buildings dating as far back to the early 1800s. Elegant examples of Victorian, Tudor, Neo-Classical and late 19th- and early 20th-century homes of various other styles are found within the boundaries of the James-Earle, Hampton-Pinckney, East Park and Pettigru Historic Districts. Conversely, some of Greenville's oldest commercial buildings are found alongside the WestEnd Market, within the WestEnd Historic District. Perhaps the more interesting place for history lovers, however, is the small and very attractive town of **Pendleton**. This portion of Upcountry suffered badly during the Cherokee Indian War, which ended in 1762. At the beginning of the American Revolution the Cherokees rose again and, this time, British soldiers – for obvious reasons – were not available to reinforce local troops. The Cherokees aligned themselves with British Loyalists and used the opportunity, once again, to attack the settlements. Undaunted, the South Carolina militia marched against the Indians and, in August/September of 1776, defeated them so completely that the Cherokees "sued for peace," subsequently surrendering their lands to the State Government. During the course of the Revolution, little settlement was effected in the region. After the hostilities ended, however, veterans, attracted by the fertile farmland, came in large enough numbers to bring about, by 1789, the formation of Pendleton County. One year later, on April 8, 1790, a site was purchased on which the courthouse was constructed and thus was established the town of Pendleton. Although the earliest settlers were, generally, farmers of Scotch-Irish descent, they were soon joined by a goodly number of well educated, wealthy Lowcountry families, who built elegant summer homes here. Consequently, the name Pendleton became synonymous with refinement and beautiful women. In 1826, upon the division of the growing district into the Anderson and Pickens Districts, Pendleton lost its courthouse town status. In 1868, Pickens was further subdivided into Pickens and Oconee and the districts were reclassified as counties.

Located today within Anderson County, the town of Pendleton in its entirety, along with an area extending into Pickens County, is listed on the National Register of Historic Houses.

The most logical place to begin a tour of this charming town is the **Village Green**. The centerpiece here is the **Farmers' Society Hall**. This building houses the Farmers' Hall Restaurant and is described in detail in the *Where To Eat* section below. The best plan for exploring the town is outlined in a brochure entitled "South Carolina's Historic Pendleton," which includes descriptions of 19 historic buildings along a marked walking tour and an additional 17 within the Historic District. This brochure is most readily available through the Pendleton District Commission, itself located in one of the historic buildings. However, except for the first weekends in April and December, it is open only Monday through Friday from 9 am to 4:30 pm.

Our Suggestion: Contact the Commission, ☎ 864-646-3782, fax 646-2506 or e-mail pendtour@innova.net, well in advance of your departure date and ask that the brochure be sent to your home. Or, if you love a gamble, you can search the local merchants upon arrival or bet that plans for an unmanned tourist office booth on Mechanic Street have come to fruition.

If you arrive before 4:30 pm on Friday, you may want to make your first stop at the Commission's headquarters in the distinctive **Hunter's Store** at 125 E. Queen Street. Built in 1850 and originally opened as the Jesse Lewis Store, it was purchased in 1870 by the Hunter family, who operated the business until 1962. Since 1968 it has housed the Commission, which, in addition to serving Anderson, Oconee and Pickens Counties, manages a tour center, a local history and research center, a number of exhibits and an arts, crafts and book shop on the premises.

Within a few minutes drive from Pendleton there are a handful of other places that you may want to visit. Of these, **Woodburn Plantation House** and **Ashtabula House**, both built in the early 19th century, can be visited for a combined admission fee of $5. Scheduled tours are on Sunday afternoons, April through October only, from 2 to 6 pm, but the homes may be visited at

other times by prior arrangement with the Foundation for Historic Restoration in Pendleton Area, ☎ 864-646-3782. A glimpse of the **Old Stone Church**, which was begun in 1789 as Hopewell-on-the-Keowee Presbyterian Church, would also be worthwhile.

On the grounds of the highly acclaimed Clemson University, also nearby, are two more historic houses. First, designated a National Historic Landmark and listed in the National Register of Historic Places, is the **John C. Calhoun House, Fort Hill**, built circa 1803 and altered circa 1825. This was the home of that eminent South Carolina statesman during the last 25 years of his life. It is a part of the 1,100-acre plantation, Fort Hill, upon which the University is situated. You may visit Monday through Saturday from 10 am to 5 pm and Sunday from 2 to 5 pm. Much smaller, but much older, is the **Hanover House**, constructed in 1716 on a site in the South Carolina Lowcountry by French Huguenots Paul de St. Julien and his wife Mary Amy Ravenel. It was dismantled in 1941 and reconstructed here, some 250 miles north of its original location. It now serves as a museum dedicated to the explication of the lifestyles of South Carolina's rice, indigo and cotton planters. It is open on Saturday from 10 am to 5 pm and on Sunday from 2 to 5 pm. Further information on either of these homes may be obtained by calling ☎ 803-656-2475.

Outdoor lovers, and particularly those wholove watersports, will find much to do in western South Carolina. The landscape is dotted with numerous lakes, many of which are privately owned. The three largest, strung along a north-to-south axis and stretching between the North Carolina and Georgia State lines, are Lake Jocassee, Lake Keowee and Lake Hartwell.

Lake Jocassee, which translates as "Place of the Lost One," is named for the legendary Indian maiden, Jocassee, who drowned herself in grief over the murder of her lover. Its 7,500 acres of deepwater and 75 miles of shoreline are surrounded dramatically by mountains and waterfalls. Both beautiful and practical, it is an integral part of the Keowee-Toxaway Complex (which incorporates nuclear and hydroelectric stations) and of Duke Power's World of Energy exhibition.

Lake Keowee, "Place of the Mulberries," was constructed by Duke Power Company to generate hydroelectric power, with 18,500 acres of water and a 300-mile shoreline. Beneath its waters lies the site of Keowee Town, capital of the Lower Cherokee Nation. Evidence confirms that the Spanish explorer Hernando De Soto visited the town when he passed through the area in 1540.

Lake Hartwell, although far and away the largest with 56,000 acres of water and 962 miles of shoreline, has a less exotic background. It was built by the US Army Corps of Engineers between 1955 and 1963 as part of a flood control and hydropower project.

There are, as you would expect, numerous opportunities for fishing and other leisure activities on these lakes, and we recommend the following. James and Stephanie Couch, who run **Fish Inc.**, ☎ 864-878-9292, at 348 U-Wharri Mountain Road, Pickens, conduct year-round fishing expeditions on Lake Jocassee from a 32-foot pontoon boat. They specialize in trolling for trout and in fishing for large and small mouth bass and crappie. They are ideal sightseeing guides as well and offer tours that take in a host of waterfalls and scenic spots. Prices begin at $150 for a four-hour trip (the minimum booking), with additional hours charged at $25 – up to a maximum trip time of 10 hours. And, if you are of two minds about whether to fish or take the tour, book a full day, then spend half fishing and the other half sightseeing. James and Stephanie will even provide you with a meal on board. If you plan to really work up an appetite, a steak dinner with all the trimmings and a soft drink is available for $20 per person extra. Alternatively, a hefty club sandwich costs $8 per person. Overnight trips are another option; contact James and Stephanie for the details.

The **Lake Keowee Marina**, ☎ 864-882-2047, e-mail bart@lakekeoweemarina.com, is on the Old Salem Highway in Seneca. Find them on the web at www.lakekeoweemarina.com. They offer boats for hire and a ships' store stocked with snacks, beverages and ice, and with boating/fishing supplies, accessories and equipment. They also sell hunting and fishing licenses. Book a peaceful cruise on a 22-foot or 28-foot pontoon

boat, renting for $150 for a full day or $115 for a half-day. Create some waves in a Sea Doo, at $55 per hour, $325 per day or $175 per half-day, or in a Ski Boat, at $175 per day or $135 per half-day.

Our Suggestion: Rent a houseboat from Lake Keowee Marina at $195 per night or $400 for a long weekend (Thursday through Sunday). Navigate your craft to an isolated spot by a rushing waterfall, share a candlelight dinner and champagne toast out on deck, do a little stargazing, and indulge yourselves in all things romantic.

If Lake Hartwell is your preferred spot, head for the **Big Water Marina**, ☎ 864-226-3339 or fax 226-0079, at 320 Big Water Road in Starr, South Carolina. Nestled in a beautiful wooded cove along the southern end of the lake and just two miles from the Hartwell Dam, it is convenient to both South Carolina and Georgia. They specialize in pontoon boats, which they rent by the full day (9 am to 5 pm) or the half-day (either 9 am to 1 pm or 1 to 5 pm). A good value is the Two-Day Special, where you get the overnight time free. The 18-foot and 20-foot boats rent for $105 per day and a 24-footer rents for $135 per day. In addition, upon your return to the dock, the staff will refill the boat's gas and oil tanks, adding the price of the gas and oil actually used to the rental fee. The marina also has a fully stocked ship's store.

If you just aren't comfortable in the role of captain and prefer to concentrate on hooking your share of the fish population, try **Fish Tales Guide Service**, ☎ 864-260-9932, e-mail info@fishhartwell.com, www.fishhartwell.com. For a fee of $100 per person (there is a two-person minimum) Wayne White will take you out on the lake either for eight hours or until you have landed 10 fish, whichever comes first. The motto here then is "catch big ones and do it slowly." Fish Tales Guide Service offers trips seven days a week, 365 days a year.

Finally, watersports enthusiasts will want to check out the **Chattooga River** that forms the border between South

Carolina and Georgia. This breathtakingly beautiful river is renowned for thrilling, cascading, rapids – hence, its Cherokee name, which translates as "Rocky Waters." It offers some of the finest whitewater and wilderness experiences in the Southeast, was included in the National Wild and Scenic River Systems in 1974, and is famous as the location for the filming of the movie *Deliverance*. If you want to take the plunge and try your luck at guided whitewater rafting, we recommend that you contact the **Nantahala Outdoor Center**, ☎ 828-488-2175, 800-232-7238, e-mail rafting@noc.com or http://www.noc.com, based in Bryson City, North Carolina. Highly experienced in whitewater rafting throughout this region of the mid-Atlantic, their expert guides offer several options on Sections 3 and 4 of the Chattooga River, rated "mild-wild" and "moderate-wild," respectively. Weekend rates range from $56 to $98 per trip, depending on the season.

Be advised, however, that these whitewater rafting excursions are not for everyone. Trips on the wild and woolly Chattooga demand significant physical exertion, and are not recommended for those who are either overweight or in less than optimum physical condition. For starters, you must be prepared to help carry the raft the quarter-mile to and from the river.

While in the Greenville area couples will certainly want to get outdoors to enjoy the extraordinary natural beauty. Whether on the shore of one of the tranquil lakes, on the grounds of one of the state parks or national forests, beside a rushing waterfall or on the peaks of the nearby Blue Ridge or Smoky Mountains, you will be hard-pressed to find a more glorious setting for a Byronic picnic lunch or supper. No one knows that better than Gail S. McDiarmid, a former member of the Greenville Convention & Visitors Bureau, who has capitalized upon her familiarity with the area and her experience in working with its visitors to form **Gourmet Peaks & Perks Romantic Picnics**. Happily for romantic weekenders, Gail specializes in pri-

vate picnics for two. She has ferreted out four spectacularly romantic spots: Mountain Top, set beside a beautiful waterfall; Mountain Cove, at the Poinsett Bridge (circa 1819, it is the oldest stone bridge in South Carolina; Mountain Lake, on Lake Oolenoy (available in summer only); and Campfire Dining on South Carolina's wild and scenic Middle Saluda River (available in winter only). All you need do is contact Gail at ☎ 864-836-0021 or 888 340-2668 or write her at PO Box 334, Cleveland, SC 29635, and indicate your choice of destination. She will respond with directions. Then, at the agreed upon time, Gail will meet you there, covered wicker basket in hand. Tucked inside will be everything you need for an elegant outdoor feast – not only a meal prepared to your specifications, but silverware, glasses, china and linen napkins – all yours to keep. And it won't cost you a fortune. The charge is $75 per picnic. Two words to the wise, however. First, if you are planning a toast to your love, bring the wine or champagne with you; it is the one thing Gail can't supply. Second, make your plans well in advance. As you can imagine, these outings are popular.

Sweet Dreams

Greenville

The **Hyatt Regency Greenville**, ☎ 864-235-1234, 800-233-1234 or fax 232-7584, 220 North Main Street, with its ideal location at the head of Main Street, is, without doubt, the hotel of choice in Greenville. Built around a lavish, eight-story atrium lobby with a cascading waterfall are 327 rooms, including 18 suites, that are of the highest standard. Regular rates are not unreasonable – a double goes for $89. The Plaza Suite rents for $250 and the larger Panorama Suite will cost you $295 per night. You will get the best value, however, by choosing from among the many special packages. The Regency Package, at $139 for the first night with additional nights billed at $79, gives you a deluxe guest room, bottle of champagne, chocolate-covered strawberries, and daily breakfast for two. The Honeymoon Package puts you in the Panorama Suite and includes all

of the foregoing (except the strawberries) at a rate of $159 for the first night and $125 for additional nights. For the ultimate in privacy, choose the Do Not Disturb Package. The two of you will hibernate in a deluxe guest room with a bottle of champagne, dinner for two through room service, a keepsake candle and, in the morning, a Continental breakfast for two. The charge is $179 for the first night, with additional nights billed at $79. Or, you may upgrade to either the Panorama or Plaza Suite at an extra $50 for the first night, with additional nights at $125 each. Parking and taxes are included with all of the above.

The **Provencia Restaurant** here is renowned for fine Italian cuisine, and in the Commons Lounge you can sip on exotic beverages in an elegant atmosphere overlooking the atrium. There is also a fully equipped exercise facility and, for warm weather, a sparkling outdoor pool and relaxing whirlpool. Conveniently and cleverly, the lobby was designed to allow direct access both to the car park and to Main Street. It is by way of the latter that the atrium becomes a social meeting place for Greenville. At no time is this more evident than in December during the annual Festival of Trees (featuring elaborately decorated Christmas Trees), which has become a Greenville tradition. Then, children of all ages find their way here for the sights, the festive atmosphere, and to choose their favorite tree.

Embodied within the name of the next hotel is the heart of its history. Opened in 1971, the Thunderbird Inn, a small, old-fashioned, and unremarkably typical Southern motor hotel, seemed to be nearing the end of its commercially useful life when the owners, father Thomas Moore and son Steve, caught a vision for a different future. Purchasing six acres of adjacent land and investing $2.5 million dollars in a total and elaborate renovation project, the Thunderbird rose from its own ashes, amazingly transformed into the **Phoenix Greenville's Inn**. Today, 185 lavishly comfortable guest rooms, a reputation for gracious hospitality and a world-class restaurant have attracted such stellar guests as Francois Michelin, Mickey Mantle and Martin Luther King, Sr.

Guest rooms, furnished with rich pine, cherry and mahogany furniture, complemented by colorful chintz and linen fabrics, are categorized and priced according to size and amenities. Leisure Rooms have four-poster queen-sized or king-sized beds, the expected conveniences of cable television, coffeemaker, hairdryer, robes, and data port, and a not so expected but welcoming fruit and wine basket. Luxury Rooms have similar appointments and amenities, but look out over the lovely courtyard and include complimentary coffee, juice, pastry and newspaper delivered to your room each morning. Two-room suites feature sleeping quarters with king-sized bed, bathroom, and living room with sofa, dining table, wet bar with refrigerator and TV/VCR. Three-room suites are comparable, but with 2½ baths and a second bedroom with two double beds. Rates range between $85 and $130 per night.

On-site dining options include The Palms Restaurant, which is described in greater detail in the *Tables for Two* section, The Palms Lounge, serving up cocktails, snacks, and entertainment on the grand piano nightly, and The Pub, offering a casual ambiance with good food, spirits and perhaps a game of pool. Rounding out the public areas is the most enticing and definitely the most romantic. The Courtyard, with its inviting pool and cozy seating, is a delightful place to enjoy a bird concerto in the morning, a cricket serenade in the evening, and each other's company anytime. And, if you are still unattached, you might well be advised (or forewarned, as the case may be) that it is among Upstate South Carolina's premier wedding locations.

The Concierge Desk will gladly coordinate a variety of off-premises recreational and/or cultural activities. Alternatively, fitness enthusiasts will enjoy complimentary use of Gold's Gym, and golf lovers will want to take advantage of membership privileges at local golf courses.

The Phoenix is at 246 North Pleasantburg Drive, Greenville, SC 29607, off Exit 40B of Interstate 385 North. Reservations may be made by calling ☎ 864-233-4651 or 1-800-257-3529 or by e-mail at phoenixinn@aol.com.

The **Creekside Plantation Bed & Breakfast**, ☎ 864-297-3293, fax 297-3533, www.bbonline.com/sc/creekside, is at 3118 S. Highway 14. A short distance outside of town and in a charming setting beside a Piedmont stream, Creekside is an ideal spot for a peaceful, romantic break. And the proprietors, Jayne and Jerry Frye, have created an ambiance to match. Each of the four luxurious bedrooms, though different from one another in decor, features a full bath, a telephone with modem connection, and satellite TV/VCR. Fresh flowers in each give a fragrant reminder that attention is also paid to those more subtle amenities that will make your stay extra special. Public areas include a charming sunroom, a swimming pool and the dining area, where guests are treated to a delicious gourmet breakfast. The cost is $150 per night. This is an adults-only establishment; pets are not welcome and, in consideration of nonsmoking patrons, smoking is allowed out-of-doors only.

Pendleton

The **Liberty Hall Inn**, ☎ 864-646-7500, 800-643-7944, fax 646-7500, 800-643-7944, e-mail libertyhall@carol.net, www.bbonline.com/sc/liberty/, is at 621 South Mechanic Street in an historically interesting home. Built over 150 years ago as a summer retreat, it wore subsequent hats as a dairy farm and a boarding house, thereafter entering a period of significant disrepair. In 1985, the home was completely restored, artfully combining old-world elegance and service with modern amenities to create an absolutely delightful 10-room inn. Prices range between $75 and $79 a night, which includes a substantial Continental breakfast. While on the subject of food, romantic weekend guests will want to be absolutely sure to book a place for dinner, served between 5:30 and 9 pm on Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings only. Dishes are reasonably priced, served à la carte, and likely to include such delicacies as "Alligator Cakes" with Ginger Peach Sauce; Baked Brie with Sweet Pecan Sauce and Fresh Fruit; Fresh Salmon in Puff Pastry with Orange Bearnaise Sauce; and Orange Roughy Parmesan. To accompany your meal, a variety of wines are offered by the glass.

Our Suggestion: After dinner (weather permitting) make your way to the wide front porch, take up residence in a pair of the inviting rocking chairs, indulge in a glass of complimentary wine, and enjoy the quiet and each other's company.

Pickens

The **Schell Haus – A Resort Bed & Breakfast and Conference Center**, ☎ 864-878-0078, fax 878-0066, www.bbonline.com/sc/schellhaus, 117 Hiawatha Trail, Scenic Highway 11, is the most remote of the places to stay in the Greenville area. This, in fact, is just one of its charms. In the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains and tucked away in the Oolenoy Valley (once home to Cherokee Indian tribes), this elegant Victorian-style house presents the perfect getaway for a romantic adventure. Each of the six rooms is tastefully furnished with antiques and antique reproductions, but two, in particular, will be of interest to those with romance on their minds. The Table Rock Room, on the upper level, is so named for its spectacular views, from a semi-bay window, of the Table Rock itself. It rents for $120 a night and features a queen-sized sleigh bed, French and English period furniture, wet bar, TV/VCR, and a whirlpool tub. The two-room Oolenoy Suite, also on the upper level, rents for a bit more at $150 a night. This suite has a queen-sized four-poster bed, a cozy sitting room with wet bar and VCR, a large bath with whirlpool tub and, of course, panoramic views. Rates for the other four rooms are slightly lower, between $80 and $100 per night. Guests enjoy a full breakfast of unique dishes that highlight seasonal local fruits, berries and produce. Afternoon refreshments are served in the parlor, a delightfully cozy room furnished with Victorian antiques, where in the winter you can warm your toes by the fire. If you are very fortunate, maybe one of the guests (perhaps even you) will tinkle the ivories on the parlor's grand piano. In summer, you may be enticed to take a dip in the pool. If your plans include a mountain hike and a picnic lunch, innkeepers

Sharon and Jim Mahanes will prepare a hamper or a backpack meal for $18 to $30 a couple.

Westminster

The **Magnolia Manor Bed & Breakfast**, ☎ 864-647-8559 or fax 882-1745, 207 Westminster Highway, Westminster, is housed within an imposing Georgian manor house that dates from the end of the 19th century. Indeed, when driving through Westminster, we were attracted by the magnificence of the building before we realized it was our destination. Steve and Ilene Sendy, your hosts, have fully restored the home, adorning the public rooms and the four guest rooms with a handsome collection of antiques, reproductions and fine art. Incredibly romantic is the second-floor Magnolia Suite, with king-sized canopy bed, gas fireplace, private bath and in-room Jacuzzi tub. Also worthy of your consideration in this bouquet of rooms are the Rose Room and the Dogwood Suite, each with fireplace. Communal amenities include a game room, a gym and 3½ acres of lovely grounds with a pond. Rates, which range from $85 to $125 a night, include a full breakfast. Hot and cold beverages, snacks and cheese trays are also on hand. No need, either, to wander far for a delightfully romantic dinner. On Friday and Saturday nights, Stephen, an accomplished chef and member of the ACF, works his magic in the kitchen, appropriately presenting his delicious gourmet fare in the elegant dining room, where tables are exquisitely laid with fine china, crystal and silver. Throughout the year Steve and Ilene offer theme weekends, which may include classes in cooking, art appreciation, photography, decorating or travel. The schedule varies, so if this idea arouses your interest call ahead for details. Pet lovers will feel right at home here; Steve and Ilene's dog, Danny, will be happy to play ball with you all day long.

Tables for Two

Greenville

Bistro Europa, ☎ 864-467-9975 or fax 232-7199, at 219 North Main Street, comes by its name honestly. It is owned and operated by an Englishman, Andrew Baird, and his American wife, Kelly. While the British may not be known for their culinary expertise, the excellent reputation earned by Bistro Europa in the four years since its opening in 1994 is testimony that Andrew is an exception. Chef Gerry Updegraff has created an enticing menu with an array of dishes featuring fish, shellfish, fowl and meats, garnished with fresh vegetables and home grown herbs. If you prefer something a little less daring, the homemade pizzas are delicious. The wine list is heavily stocked with Californian varieties, but has a sprinkling of international bottles – many of which are available by the glass. Beer and liquor drinkers are not ignored either. A wide range of imported beers, several micro-brews, and no fewer than 15 brands of vodka are but a few of the choices. And coffee lovers will delight in the selection of decaf and cappuccino. Our abiding memory of the Bistro Europa is when, late on a Friday evening during the first week of December, the unseasonably balmy weather allowed a romantic dinner in their sidewalk café. And what a meal it was: Smoked Duck's Breast with Baby Lettuces and Lingonberry-Horseradish Vinaigrette ($8.95), followed by Seafood Fiore', mussels, clams, oysters, shrimp and scallops in a spicy red wine sauce, and Bistro Vegetables ($18.95).

The particular International flavor served up at **Lemongrass Thai Cuisine**, ☎ 864-241-9988, is obvious by the name. Thai restaurants are few and far between in this country, especially outside of the major cities. It was a pleasant surprise to find one, and of this quality, in downtown Greenville. The goal of Thai cuisine is the creation of dishes that subtly stimulate and tantalize the taste buds through a delicate blending of spices and sauces with main ingredients. The Lemongrass hits the mark with distinction. The menu, in typical Thai manner, fea-

tures a wide selection of soups, appetizers ($3.50 to $6.95), curry ($9.95), seafood entrées ($12.95 to $16.95) and meat and poultry entrées ($8.95 to $10.95), as well as noodles, fried rice and many vegetarian dishes ($7.95 to $9.95). Some meals are spicy and hot, and the menu marks these with an arrow. Keep in mind when ordering, though, that the chef will gladly spice any entrée, from mild to very hot, to your individual taste.

"Soby's is new, but it has its act together," wrote one restaurant critic, and that just about sums it up. **Soby's New South Cuisine** is indeed new, both in age and style. In 1997, the owner of Cancellation Shoe Mart at 207 South Main Street was ready to retire. Fortuitously, at that same time, Frank Kapp, Carl Sobocinski and David Williams, sharing a common dream and armed with a tidy sum from 16 investors, were in search of a home for their fledgling culinary venture. And so, as seller and buyer struck a deal, a restaurant was born.

From the time the papers were signed, Frank, Carl and David put their noses to the grindstone. The 1880s building that had been a cotton gin, grocery store and shoe store was gutted from floor to ceiling. What they found was a hidden treasure. Behind wood paneling, sheet rock, 2 x 4 wood framing and plaster were the handmade brick walls that now frame the bar, dining room and mezzanine dining area. Above an acoustical tile drop ceiling, an additional plaster ceiling and over 300 pieces of wooden joists, were beautiful hand-hewn timber trusses. Around these original structural attributes the three entrepreneurs fashioned the perfect setting for an exquisite dining experience, refurbishing and tiling bathrooms, cleaning and milling wood salvaged from the original building for use as flooring, in the construction of booths and to frame doorways, and crafting two stone fireplaces. The centerpiece, however, literally and aesthetically, is the open kitchen. Visible to most every diner, the bustle of the culinary staff as they prepare the evening's delicacies is best enjoyed by those seated on the mezzanine, which wraps the kitchen on three sides.

The cuisine finds its inspiration in "down home" Southern cooking, its flair in contemporary preparation and its elegance in creative presentation. Starters include Fried Green To-

matoes, with wilted Southern greens, jalapeño pimento cheese and crispy leeks ($4.50); and Cornmeal Breaded Fried Calamari, served with Creole sauce and tomato horseradish tartar ($5.75). This might be followed by a salad of Spinach, Dried Cranberries, Smithfield Ham, Blue Cheese and Teardrop Tomatoes, with applewood-smoked bacon-horseradish-buttermilk dressing. If you still have room for a main course, priced in the $12.50 to $19.50 range, you might have trouble choosing between Roasted Salmon Wrapped in Applewood-Smoked Bacon, with lobster, asparagus, corn and white cheddar grits; or Soby's Wild Mushroom Meatloaf. We never made it to dessert, but are told that the White Chocolate Banana Cream Pie is to die for. Needless to say, the wine list is comparably persuasive. Considering the host of impressive awards (such as the 1998 Wine Spectator Award of Excellence) that have recommended it, and the faithful following who frequent it, reservationsare suggested (☎ 864-232-7007 or fax 864-232-8496). Soby's is open for dinner only, Monday through Saturday.

The **Palms Restaurant** located within and overlooking the very romantic courtyard of the Phoenix Hotel, 246 North Pleasantburg Drive, Greenville, SC 29607, ☎ 864-233-4651 or 800-257-3529, operates under the direction of award-winning chef Donald Hiers. The menus, featuring Continental and regional fare, are well complemented by selections from a distinctive wine cellar. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are served daily. Midday fare includes soups, appetizers, entrées in the $10.95 to $13.95 range and a selection of gourmet sandwiches, such as Fried Tilapia Sandwich with Herbed Mayonnaise, in the $8 range. At dinner, a similar, but more expansive menu is on offer. Among the appetizers, Shiitake Mushroom Tart with Roast Red Pepper Coulis ($7.95) and Scallop Ravioli in Saffron Cream with Salmon Caviar ($6.95) are interesting options. And, an entrée such as Polenta-Crusted Tuna Loin Steak with Mattelote Sauce (at market price) will tickle the taste buds of any seafood lover. Other entrées are in the $14.95 to $24.95 price range and, a bit unusually, fall and winter menus will feature venison and

other game. As a finale, any of the decadent desserts could entice the most stringent dieter.

Pendleton

The **Farmers' Hall Restaurant**, ☎ 864-646-7024, fax 646-5681, is found at 105 Exchange Street. It is housed within an historic Greek Revival structure built in 1826 and augmented with columns in 1848. Set upon the Village Green, it is the centerpiece of Pendleton and the oldest Farmers' Hall in continuous use in the United States. On the second floor is the meeting hall where Thomas Green Clemson so strongly campaigned for the establishment of a state agriculture college, now the internationally acclaimed Clemson University. Another prominent member of the Farmers' Society was John C. Calhoun, a former United States Vice President. The ground floor, which from the building's inception has been occupied by a commercial establishment, most notably the US Post Office, is the site of the restaurant itself. The owner, Englishman Alex Fraser, has devised a menu in part American and in part English. Featured are such Limey specialties as roast beef ($5.25), mixed grill ($12.95); and lamb chops ($16.95) – that we suspect must be the tastiest and most succulent this side of the Atlantic. If you want to enjoy the latter in true British fashion, ask Alex to bring out his best imported mint sauce (not the brand he serves to less discriminating patrons). House wines are available either by the glass or by the liter carafe, with the wine list offering a respectable selection of finer wines. Those with heartier tastes will enjoy the draft Palmetto Pale Ale, from a Charleston Brewery. The restaurant is open for lunch Monday through Saturday from 11:30 am to 2:30 pm, with dinner service beginning at 5:30 pm and, like many things in this area, ending early. Reservations are advised.

Shops, Spas, etc.

Whether you prefer to say "I love you" with the simplicity of a single rose or to make a flamboyant declaration with several dozen, **Drake's at Ivey's Square** will help you create a mem-

ory. Call ahead, ☎ 864-232-3861, 800-232-3866 or fax 467-0076. The owner, Louise Lister, will ensure that the pick of her selection is waiting in your hotel room, at a restaurant or, at some other destination of your choosing. While you are touring the town, check out her store at 205 N. Main Street, where you will find many items of floral artistry and a variety of interesting gifts on display.

A glance through the Yellow Pages will tell you there is no shortage of wine shops in Greenville, and most of them have some fine bottles of champagne. There is, however, one shop that, to our minds, stands above the rest. Richard de Bondt immigrated to America with his Dutch/Yugoslav parents and eventually took a job in a restaurant. Among the things he learned on that job was that it was difficult to find fine wines. Seizing an opportunity, he opened his own store, and what you will find at **Northampton Wines**, 109 Cleveland Street, ☎ 864-271-3919, would not be out of place in a city much larger and more sophisticated, than Greenville. There is an amazing range of champagnes, including some of the largest bottles you will see anywhere. While it is not inexpensive, the connoisseurs among you could take away a real gem – a magnum of Veuve Clicquot La Grande Dame. Be sure to ask also about the fascinating story behind that name. Those of you whose tastes run to reds will be tempted by the Spanish Rioja and French Burgundy wines. Take full advantage also of Northampton Wines' selection of cheeses, pâtés, crackers and biscuits. You will enjoy them later and there is no place else downtown to get something similar.

Our Suggestion: Plan to arrive in Greenville early on a Friday evening, and head first to Northampton Wines for their Friday tastings. These start at 7 pm and usually last until around 8:15. The admission price varies according to the wines being tasted.

Your special bottle of champagne is in hand. Now, think ahead. You have retired to the privacy of your hotel room, the lights are dimmed, you pop the cork, you reach for the hotel water glasses... but wait! There's a better option. Visit **Ilyn Strong**, ☎ 864-233-5900 or fax 864-233-1169, at 119 North Main Street, just across from the Hyatt Regency Hotel, where a gallery of fine jewelry and other artistically beautiful creations awaits your perusal. llyn is a Greenville native who, from an early age, had a keen interest in jewelry design. When she began her career in the early 1970s, however, this was a male-dominated trade, and it took no little effort to convince a local jewelry store to hire her on as a bridal consultant and saleswoman. Concurrent with her employment, she crafted her own designs at home, developing a unique style, which she describes as "wearable art." By 1989 she had opened her first store and, shortly thereafter, she was named one of "America's 10 Rising Stars for the '90s" by Jewelers Circular Keystone magazine. In 1992, she purchased the building at 119 North Main Street, where she opened, and still operates, the llyn Strong Gallery. In addition to her designs, fashioned mostly of gold, silver and platinum, you will find a showcase of captivating works by 200-plus jewelers, metalsmiths, glass artists, ceramicists, painters, photographers, sculptors, textile artists and woodsmiths. Prices range from an affordable $15 upwards to $15,000.

llynn now enjoys international acclaim. She currently designs and manufactures a patented and distinctive line of modular jewelry, Modulyn, which consists of a variety of interchangeable jewelry pieces. The basic components, earrings and earring jackets, may be dismantled, and other components added, to create a broach or a pendant, for example. You can let your imagination run free to create a piece that expresses your personality, or change the design with the mood of the day or to suit your outfit.

We got so carried away describing the gallery that we almost forgot about the champagne. Excellent champagne deserves elegant presentation and at llyn's place the solution is at your fingertips. Hand-blown champagne flutes, covered with shimmering gold particles and selling for $50 a stem, are the popu-

lar creation of Otto Franek, a Czech immigrant who now works out of New York.

The emergence of such a gallery as Ilyn Strong's is testimony to the sophistication of Greenville, all the more delightful for the fact that we were not expecting it. Visit the gallery between 10 am and 5:30 pm, Monday-Thursday and Saturday, or between 10 am and 9 pm on Friday. They are also open by appointment.

Guys who really want to pamper their sweetheart will take her on a shopping spree for some of **The Finer Things**, ☎ 864-232-9577. Travel along Augusta Road, passing the WestEnd Market, to number 1803, where proprietress Martha Wilson has fashioned a shop full of items to entice. If you are in a particularly generous mood, outfit your ladylove from head to toe from a selection of beautiful gowns, handbags and accessories. Alternatively, treat her to a sampling from the many bath accessories, soaps and powders. Be advised, however, that it is the wide range of pretty lingerie that will surely seduce – particularly the lacy creations of Claire Pettibone. You will also find a variety of home accessories, notably an array of fine bedding.

Those in a playful and slightly more risqué frame of mind may want to check out **Chantilly's Lingerie**, ☎ 864-292-9069, about 15 minutes from the center of Greenville at 4 Gallery Center, 3110 Wade Hampton Boulevard, Taylors, SC. Here you will discover an eclectic range of products put together by Lyn Self, the owner. The front room displays a selection of exotic lingerie, including plus sizes. The remaining two rooms contain a diversity of items designed to stretch your romantic imagination. In addition to the anticipated massage oils and gels, sexy candies, handcuffs, adult games and edible undies, she has the Bouquet of Roses, which blossoms (with a little manipulation) into delightful pieces of lingerie. Of course, Lyn also carries a selection of more outlandish toys. More adventurous couples among you may want to look for the ubiquitous Rabbit.

Back at the WestEnd Market, which we explored a little earlier, the largest and most interesting store is the **Milltown Emporium**, ☎ 864-271-0953 or fax 271-0954, at One Augusta

Street. Here, joint proprietors Deb Arrington and Jennifer Ramos have contrived a modern art agora that will bewitch you by its color and variety. Literally everywhere you feast your eyes, innovative creations call out "buy me, buy me." Angels fashioned by a Polish woodcarver and large angels crafted of metal will wing their way into your heart. Wall hangings from the Caribbean make an ultra-colorful statement. Prints of folks at the beach by well-known artist Lynn Greer evoke memories of lazy, sun-kissed days. And metallic hearts by Californian Anthony Hansan of California offer a choice of sentimental verses. Jennifer also proudly stocks a variety of stained glass items fashioned by her husband, David.

There is so much on show at the Milltown Emporium that everyone will find a favorite. We certainly found ours. We came upon an item so unusual we can't imagine a romantically minded person who could resist its charm. You will need to look carefully, though, as the TeaCup Fairies make a sport of playing hide and seek in a favorite tea cup or china slipper. Indeed, the artist seems to have endowed these tiny angelic creatures with the very essence of innocent and impish life. Their bodies are molded of clay and their faces, created out of the finest porcelain, are framed with locks of human hair. And, when they venture from their hiding places, they are borne silently and gently aloft upon real butterfly wings. Admittedly, it isn't inexpensive to adopt a TeaCup Fairy, around $200. But you may come to feel, as Kathy does, that you have added a precious member to your household.

Norman's Suggestion: Guys, there is a way to make this remarkable gift even more unusual. Before coming to Greenville, surreptitiously appropriate your lady's favorite teacup and saucer. If you can manage it, you may also include some clippings of her own hair. Send these on to Deb and Jennifer, who will forward them to the designer of the TeaCup Fairies for use in creating a very personal gift that will be treasured always. True, you will have to allow yourself consid-

> *erable lead-time. While we tried and tried to get from Deb and Jennifer the name and address of the artist concerned, being astute business people they politely demurred.*

Gift baskets, too, make a great surprise on a romantic weekend and the folks at **Baskets & More**, ☎ 864-297-6768, 11842 Woodruff Road, will be delighted to assist you in this regard. Gentlemen, for $35 you can pamper your love with the Special Lady – a delicate basket filled with fragrant toiletries, a brass picture frame, an oil lamp and delicious imported sweets. Ladies, you can reciprocate the favor for $25 with For Men Only – custom-designed with a distinctive gift item and gourmet snacks of your choosing. In order, though, to take best advantage of Baskets & More's impressive variety of gift items, make the drive out to the corner of Woodruff & Butler Roads and put together a basket of your own. Crabtree & Evelyn, Department 56, Claire Burke, Romantique and Lladro are well represented. Add to the mixture a wide array of gourmet foods, bath accessories and fragrances, silk floral arrangements and home decor items and you definitely have a recipe for success. Consider, also, the collection of Portmeirion Pottery – especially the collectible teapots – a lovely but useful reminder of your romantic weekend. Baskets & More is open Monday to Friday, 10 am to 6 pm, and on Saturday between 10 am and 4 pm. You will love their creative style.

These days, no forward-looking city is without a day spa of distinction, and Greenville is right in step. In fact, to our minds, the **Day Spa on Park Avenue**, ☎ 864-235-7721 and 233-1890, 3 East Park Avenue, is among the leaders of its kind. Massage therapy, skin care, full body treatments, and cosmetic nail and hair services are their specialty. Both ladies and gents will find a treatment here to suit their needs. And, before leaving, you will want to pick up an unusual souvenir. On a table near the front desk you will find loaves of glycerine soaps handmade in California. These come in many different fragrances and can be cut down into bars for an additional $6. To keep them dry

and make them last longer, Carol sells little wooden dishes for just $4 each.

Norman's Suggestion: If you really want to impress your loved one, and have her pampered and fully in the mood for a romantic evening's delight, then call Carol McAlister, the proprietress, and book a Day at the Spa. The tariff of $160 includes total body massage, facial, Aveda makeover using the natural products of choice recommended by the salon, aromatherapy scalp massage, salt glow treatment, manicure, pedicure, paraffin hand treatment, foot massage and champagne lunch.

Hilton Head & Daufuskie Island

History

It has been established that native Indians lived in the area for many millennia and, indeed, the Indian Shell Ring, in the Sea Pines Forest and dating back to 1450 BC, is on the National Register of Historic Places. It was not until the early 16th century, however, that Spanish forces explored these coastal waterways. Later that century, in 1562, Captain Jean Ribaut, a French Huguenot, established a small settlement at Charlesfort, almost within sight of present day Beaufort, naming the area "Port Royal." This, the first Protestant settlement in the United States, was ill fated, however. Upon Ribaut's return to France for reinforcements, the soldiers who remained revolted and built a ship, considered to be the first vessel built in America to cross the Atlantic, and they returned to France.

A hundred years later in August of 1663, an English captain, William Hilton, spotted the high bluffs of the island while ex-

ploring the Port Royal Sound. After visiting this 12-mile-long and five-mile-wide, foot-shaped Barrier Island, and modesty notwithstanding, he named it "**Hilton Head Island**," with "head" being the maritime word referring to headlands visible from the sea. In 1698, King Charles II granted several islands and some of the mainland to John Bayley. This area, with the exception of Hilton Head Island, was subsequently known as Bayley's Barony. The first white settlers did not arrive, however, until 1717, when the Lords Proprietors, in recognition of his actions in subduing the rioting Yemassee Indians granted Colonel John Barnwell substantial acreage on the northwest corner of the island. By the time the Revolutionary War broke out, up to 25 families lived on the island, enduring frequent raids by the British, who burned plantations and captured slaves – which they later sold in the West Indies.

It was not until after the war that Hilton Head Island gained international recognition. Then, in 1790, William Elliott, an island planter, raised the first, and soon to be famous, long-staple Sea Island cotton. Working with his neighbor, William Seabrook, he discovered a new procedure for fertilization – alternating, annually, marsh mud and oyster shells, which produced record crops. Both cotton and rice crops, with the brief interlude caused by invasions during the War of 1812, brought prosperity in abundance until, by 1860, there were 24 area plantations in operation. This, though, this was not translated upon this island into the typical rise of mansions. In most cases the plantation owners, loathing the hot summers and fearing the diseases caused by mosquitoes, spent little time on the island. They preferred to keep their main residences, many of which can still be seen today, in the more comfortable surroundings of Beaufort or Charleston.

The Civil War, however, was as disastrous to Hilton Head's way of life as it was for that of the state. On November 7, 1861, in the Battle of Port Royal, the largest naval battle fought in American waters, Union forces won a decisive victory. As panicked plantation owners fled, 1,000 or more slaves were freed, and by the end of the war over 50,000 Union troops, support personnel and slaves were based on the island.

As an interesting footnote, black males on the island and in the immediate area were forced into uniform, thus becoming the first blacks in the Union forces. Later, these same slaves were able to purchase land with the money they had earned in their country's service. General Ormsby Mitchel, a Union commander who would die of malaria in 1862, had the foresight to establish, in the same year, the nation's first freedman's town, appropriately named Mitchelville. Home, at one time, to over 1,500 people, it slowly disappeared after the Federal troops departed.

The island remained home, however, to small communities of former slaves. In fact, Special Field Order Number 15, issued by General William Tecumseh Sherman on January 15, 1865, granted the Sea Islands territories, from the Carolinas to northern Florida, to the now-freed slaves and prohibited whites from settling there. The inhabitants survived on what they could raise on their small farms, and by hunting and fishing. Because they remained in a communal environment with little or no influence from American culture, these peoples, who have come to be called the "Gullah," have retained to this day the culture, traditions and language of their native West Africa. For a more detailed explanation of the Gullah and their link to West Africa, see a discussion of the Penn School on page 277. This unique culture is celebrated each February when the month-long annual Native Islander Gullah Celebration, www.gullahcelebration.com, showcases the fascinating arts, crafts, history, music and food of these people. Alternatively, **Gullah-N-Geechee Mahn Tours**, ☎ 843-838-7516 and **Gullah Heritage Trail Tours**, ☎ 843-681-7066, both offer year-round opportunities to experience this unusual culture.

In the 1890s thousands of acres of land in the surrounding areas were sold to private hunt clubs that attracted, primarily, wealthy northerners. Much more land was acquired for this purpose when the Federal Government released lands in 1931.

By this time, over on the islands, the dreaded boll weevil pest had destroyed the cotton crop, and Hilton Head, with a population of around 300 blacks, was still accessible by water only.

In the 1950s, a group of entrepreneurs, including General Joseph Fraser, recognized that the tall pine trees, commonly known as Sea Pines and found throughout the island, were marketable for a number of uses. They set about buying up 19,000 of the island's 25,000 acres for their timber business. Modernization, though, was slow. It wasn't until 1951 that electric power finally came to Hilton Head Island and, finally, in 1956, a two-lane bridge replaced the ferry service as the main access to the island.

Around this same time, the General's son, Charles Fraser, had a grand vision for the future of Hilton Head Island, and, in preparation for making it a reality, acquired a controlling interest in the family's holdings. The younger Fraser believed that, if he offered a host of upscale amenities such as golf courses and marinas first, then further development would follow. This, he conceived, would take the form of a series of communities masterfully-planned to be of the highest value with the lowest environmental impact. These days, his legacy lives on in 11 major resort and residential communities that conform, in their own way, to the elegant "Hilton Head Look." According to 1997 research and profile studies, a population of 2,500 in 1970 has now dramatically increased to more than 35,000 permanent residents, with 2.38 million visitors arriving each year. Hilton Head Island, which attains and perhaps surpasses Fraser's high ideals, is now world-famous and plays host to such diverse events as the MCI Classic – The Heritage of Golf tournament, for the top PGA professionals, and the annual Renaissance Weekend, an informal think-tank attended by a host of notables, traditionally including President Clinton.

The Islands Today

Our initial contact with Hilton Head Island came during our research for this guide; while we had heard and read much

about its attributes, we were not prepared to be quite so impressed. We found wonderful, unspoiled beaches, beautiful beachfront hotels/resorts, outdoor pools encompassed by impeccably manicured gardens, numerous marinas, hundreds of restaurants – including the ubiquitous fast- food chains – and all manner of shops and shopping centers. And, what is really amazing is that these wonderfully civilized and modern attractions reside in total harmony with and without distracting from the island's main attraction – its natural beauty. It is obvious that attention has been given to even the smallest of details. It is as though, with painstaking care, these modern facilities have been sculpted out of the island.

Daufuskie Island

About a mile to the west of the southernmost point of Hilton Head Island and separated from the mainland by the waters of the Calibogue Sound and Cooper and New Rivers, is Daufuskie Island. This island's earliest residents, native Americans, made their home here as much as 9,000 years ago. Many millennia later the plantation culture arrived with the planting of indigo and rice in the 1700s, reaching its peak during the 19th century, when the Sea Island cotton crops brought much wealth. Indeed, at its zenith in the middle of that century, there were 10 plantations on Daufuskie Island alone, each competing with the other for grandeur and hospitality. In fact Melrose, on what is presently the site of the inn, was considered to be one of the finest plantations in all of the Sea Islands. Its grand formal gardens were magnificent and the mansion was furnished with pieces and artwork imported from England and France.

As with its neighbors, this grandeur came to an abrupt end as plantation owners fled Union forces upon the opening of the Civil War. Following the war the island's only inhabitants were the former Gullah slaves, who, having purchased small plots of land, flourished by continuing the production Sea Island cotton. This, too, came to an end, falling prey to the ravages of the boll weevil in the 1920s and of the economic depression in the

next decade. Harvesting of oysters provided a temporary boom. Daufuskie ones were hungrily sought by gourmets from around the world until pollution in the Savannah River closed the beds in the 1950s. The population of this island, historically, has been quite small. In 1910 it was a mere 112 and, although this increased when the oyster trade was flourishing, it dropped again dramatically as those revenues subsided, reaching a low of 59 in 1980.

Around that time, resort developers woke up to the possibilities inherent on the sleepy island of Daufuskie. Not wishing, however, to repeat what they believed to be mistakes made in developing neighboring coastal island resorts, they set about to create a simple, unspoiled retreat. To their minds, this meant no bridge to the mainland, no vehicular traffic, no motels, no malls and no theaters. It certainly did not mean, though, that luxury would be spared. The Daufuskie Island Club & Resort has carefully developed the island to include, in a pleasant combination, a private community at Bloody Point and a small oceanfront inn and beach cottages open to the public at Melrose. Prestigious golf courses, clubhouses, and a tennis center have been carefully blended into the environment as well. There is even an Equestrian Center, where novices or accomplished riders can take advantage of a wide array of programs. Add to these the natural charms of the island – pristine beaches, water sports, well-stocked fresh water lakes and the low key, very relaxed, atmosphere and you have all the makings for an unforgettable romantic weekend.

Things to Do

People flock to Hilton Head Island seeking sun and fun. But this island, the first eco-planned destination in the United States, is a wildlife sanctuary as well. According to the Audubon Society, nearly 350 species of native American birds have been spotted on Hilton Head Island over the past 10 years, with some 200 species of birds making the lakes, marshes and shoreline of the island their home. On land there are deer, bobcats, otters and minks, while the surrounding waters are home

to loggerhead turtles and bottlenose dolphins. The American alligator, too, is a famous resident of the island, with the massive male of the species reaching an average length of 12 feet and a weight of 500 lbs. They are not as reclusive as one might imagine and visitors are likely to spot some during their stay. If you want to learn more about these creatures, the **Coastal Discovery Museum**, is at the north end of Highway 278, ☎ 843-689-6767, fax 689-6769, e-mail hhimuseum@hargray.com, www.hhisland.com/hiltonhead/museum.html, PO Box 23497, 100 William Hilton Parkway. It features two floors of interesting exhibits, some hands-on, and offers 16 different tours and cruises around the island on six days a week.

As you might expect on an island, you can choose from any number of boat trips, but, before we detail our favorites, let us introduce you to a unique way of getting around the Island, both on land and water. **Cool Stuff Tours**, ☎ 843-342-3000, 31 Hawkes Road, Box 1703, Bluffton, SC 29910, operates an amphibious vehicle that functions as both bus and boat and, for $29 per person, will take you on a 2¼-hour tour that does not repeat any scenery. Departing, rather incongruously, from the Sam's Club parking lot in the Port Royal Plaza (at mile 5 marker on Highway 278), it leaves at times that vary due to tires and tides. First, it drives you to the Intracoastal Waterway at Buckingham Landing, where it takes to the water and cruises south past Pickney Island, Jenkins Island, Spanish Wells, Bram's Point and Buck Island before traveling up Broad Creek, coming out of the water at the Old Oyster Factory, and driving back to Sam's Club. This nifty narrated tour is jampacked with information; you will both have fun and learn about dolphins, pirates, history, Indians, sailors and many other things.

If catamarans excite you, the person to contact is Jeanne Zailckas at **Advanced Sail, Inc.**, ☎ 843-686-2582 or 785-7131 and www.hiltonheadisland.com/sailing. Based at the Palmetto Bay Marina, they operate the *Pau Hana*, loosely translated "Happy Hour," which, at 53 feet long and 26 feet wide, is Hilton Head's largest sailboat. With 49 comfortable seats, and ample deck space to move about on beneath a hard Bimini top, it of-

fers a choice of morning, afternoon or sunset cruises that last two hours and cost $20 per person. You are welcome to bring your own refreshments and, of course, a camera to capture that memorable moment when you steer the boat. Advanced Sail, Inc. also operates the more intimate *Flying Circus*, which, at 27 feet long by 16 feet wide, is just perfect for a very romantic private charter. Jeanne will happily work with you to customize a trip and, if you wish, she will prepare a picnic basket, which can include champagne and oysters, among other goodies. The minimum cost is $150 for two hours, with each additional hour $60.

Vagabond Cruise, ☎ 843-842-4155 or 842-7179, Harbour Town, offers a variety of traditional sailings. If you have ever wondered what it would be like to sail in a real America's Cup yacht, then this is your chance. Currently in the Vagabond fleet is the 65-foot $4 million *Stars & Stripes*, a yacht that was skippered by Dennis Connor in the America's Cup. These days, though, it is your turn to feel the excitement as over 2,000 square feet of sails unfurl above you. The midday, 2 pm and 4 pm cruises cost $19 per person; the 6 pm sunset cruise costs $5 more. Their *Spirit of Harbour Town*, a 73-foot high-speed luxury passenger yacht, offers novel transport to Savannah, but we believe that romantic weekenders on Hilton Head Island will favor its sunset dinner cruises. These are scheduled throughout the year, although sailing times vary. Thursday and Saturday cruises serve a prime rib meal, costing $45 per person, and the Friday cruises feature a seafood buffet at an additional $4 each.

Curiously quaint Daufuskie Island, located just over the water from Hilton Head Island, is worth a visit; and the best way to go is via Vagabond Cruise's Daufuskie Island Adventure, which begins with a 35-minute cruise departing from Harbour Town, the marina nearest to Daufuskie. Once aboard the *Vagabond*, your naturalist captain who will provide a running commentary on points of interest such as the historic Haig Point Lighthouse and ruins of antebellum slave quarters. After disembarking, a tour of the island includes admission to the 125-year-old African Baptist Church, takes in the remains of

the Oyster Houses, and visits one of the finest unspoiled beaches in the Lowcountry. The total adventure, scheduled for 10:30 am to 2:30 pm, is offered year-round, although with a varying schedule, and costs just $29 per person.

The popularity of saltwater fly-fishing and light tackle fishing is on the rise and, if that strikes your fancy, Travers Davis, owner of **Lowcountry Outfitters Inc.**, ☎ 843-837-6100, 800-935-9666 or fax 837-6200, 1533 Fording Island Road, Suite 316, is the person who can meet your needs. Lowcountry Outfitters Inc. is not on the island itself. It is in the Moss Creek Village Shopping Center, a short distance to the right after you cross the bridge from the island to the mainland. Upon request, Travers will arrange for you to go out with Captain Marty Pinkston, who has 20 years-plus of local experience, on his 18-foot Hewes Bonefisher vessel, the *Fly Boy*. Whether saltwater fly-fishing, looking for redfish, Spanish mackerel, ladyfish, jacks or cobia, or light tackle fishing for king mackerel and tarpon, the rate will be $225 for a half-day (four hours) and $400 for a full day (eight hours).

Lowcountry Outfitters is not just about fishing. The wide range of rods, reels and lines share their store space with an equally extensive array of stylish clothing suitable for casual wear. Travers also carries a large selection of highly acclaimed British waterproof/thornproof Barbour coats and sweaters. Mindful of his female customers, or of wives and girlfriends waiting for their partners, there is also a substantial ladies' section. For those interested in hunting, there are well-stocked gun and hunting rooms as well. Lowcountry Outfitters also displays many special gift and souvenir items: decoys, binoculars, prints, books, knives, Victorinox Swiss Tools, miniature ducks crafted of pewter by Jim Island Miniatures, and a walk-in humidor with a fine selection of cigars.

Perhaps you fancy a spot of sport fishing, with sharks, king mackerel, Spanish, blues, redfish and cobia in mind. If so, contact Captain Chris Sanders of **Atlantic Reef Charters**, ☎ 843-689-3244, 888-689-DIVE (outside South Carolina), e-mail captcs@aol.com, www.islandscuba.com, 1B Mathews Court. He will take you out for a half-day's fishing offshore

($295) or for a half-day in the backwater ($225), with drinks and ice provided.

Our Suggestion: Leave the fishing for another trip. Book a romantic two-hour specialty charter at a base price of $150, and spend a few extra bucks for a violinist to serenade you while on board.

The environment around Hilton Head Island is naturally ideal for kayaking, and there are several companies on the island offering such services. Of these, we recommend you contact **Outside Hilton Head**, ☎ 843-686-6996 or 800-686-6996, which operates stores at The Plaza at Shelter Cove and at South Beach Marina Village. They coordinate a wide variety of trips, which depart from one of three locations: Pinckey Island Wildlife Refuge from Schillings Boathouse, Broad Creek from the Old Oyster Factory, or Calibogue Sound from South Beach Marina. Among the shortest trips, lasting two hours and costing $35 per adult, is one that combines an introduction to kayaking with a fun and educational nature tour. After a brief clinic covering the basics, your guide, also an experienced and interpretive naturalist, will lead you out to the marshlands for an up-close view of bird life and other indigenous creatures. You might also consider a sunset, full moon, morning birding or marsh exploration tour, each of which costs $35 per adult and lasts two hours. Half-day, full-day and overnight retreat adventures are also available. If you are serious in wanting to learn fascinating facts and anecdotes about the marshes and their inhabitants, then pay special attention to the very few days on weekends each year when the Author Tour is scheduled. This is led by the island's premier interpretive naturalist and author of *Tideland Treasure*, Todd Ballantine, at a cost of $50 per adult. The cost includes a signed copy of his guide.

Even if you aren't into kayaks, a visit to an **Outside Hilton Store** can be an adventure in itself. Alongside Perception and Wilderness Systems kayaks and the accompanying paraphernalia is quite an array of other great stuff. Outside Hilton Head stocks a full range of stylish and practical outdoor clothing for

both men and women. Other sports are represented as well, with in-line skats and hockey gear in abundance. There are also displays of sports watches, Victorinox knives, CDs featuring lively island-style music, books and Bollé sunglasses with interchangeable lens.

For further information about Hilton Head Island, contact the **Visitor & Convention Bureau**, PO Box 5647, Hilton Head Island, SC 29938, ☎ 843-785-3673, fax 785-7110, e-mail info@hiltonheadisland.org, www.hiltonheadisland.org. The friendly folks there will be happy to send you all the information you require, as well as an up-to-date listing of the upcoming events. Of those, definitely keep an eye out for the annual WineFest Weekend in March, when Hilton Head hosts the largest outdoor tented wine tasting on the East Coast. In 1999 (its 14th successive year) over 100 wineries and more than 450 wines were represented. Admission was $25 per person, which included a souvenir tasting glass.

Just a mile away, the quieter Daufuskie Island, accessible only by boat (or plane) as described above, offers many activities, but a more peaceful environment. It is home to just one quite small, but particularly charming, inn that is described below. Daufuskie, indeed, is a perfect setting for lazing around the pool or strolling along the fantastic beaches, but those with energy to burn have options, too. Sports lovers will enjoy golf on either the Jack Nicklaus Signature or Tom Weiskopf/Jay Morrish-designed course, as well as tennis, croquet, lawn bowling, water-skiing, parasailing, jet skiing, and any number of opportunities at the Equestrian Center. On the other hand, the island's history should not go unexplored. Beginning at 9 am and 4 pm, daily, local Island historians lead 90-minute tours, during which you will hear the best of the local yarns; pass the historic and recently restored 1872 Haig Point Lighthouse; see the Mary Fields Elementary School where novelist Pat Conroy once taught; visit the Mary Dunn Cemetery – the lasting resting place of many prominent antebellum era families; the First Union African Baptist Church – used continuously for more than a century; and see the studios of local artist Christina Bates and potter Bob Burns.

Sweet Dreams

Hilton Head Island

The **Crowne Plaza Resort**, ☎ 843-842-2400, 800-334-1881, fax 842-9975, is at 130 Shipyard Drive. Their e-mail is info@crowneplazaresort.com; website is www.crowneplazaresort.com. This 11-acre oceanfront resort with a nautical theme is secluded in Shipyard Plantation, just off Highway 278. Opened in 1993, the AAA Four-Diamond establishment aspires to provide the finest in accommodations and, to that end, began a $9 million renovation/expansion in 1998. It has 340 elegantly appointed rooms, including nine suites, each featuring a balcony – with either a tropical, island or ocean view, coffeemaker, in-room safe, voice-mail system, and data ports on the telephones. Room rates vary according to view and season, and prices range from $139 to $319 a night. But there are always special promotions, of which the Romantic Getaway package will be of special interest to romantic weekenders. Included are a welcome bottle of champagne and strawberries, Carolina breakfast buffet for two, nightly turndown service, gourmet picnic basket including wine or non-alcoholic beverage, and a three-hour complimentary bicycle rental for two. Rates, again, vary over the six seasons, with the minimum being $145 and the maximum $275 per night; a discount is offered for additional nights.

You'll also find three full-service restaurants, one of which, Portz, is described more fully in the *Tables for Two* section, and the Dockers Poolside, a bar and grille with seating on a deck overlooking the pool and lagoon. Other communal amenities include a full-service recreational facility with professional exercise equipment, indoor/outdoor whirlpools, indoor pool, outdoor activity pool and saunas, and 27 holes of golf – including a Pro Shop and Clubhouse in Shipyard Plantation. Complimentary valet parking further emphasizes the importance placed on service here. The management considers every member of staff to be a part of the guest's crew, and each crew member is

trained, and encouraged, to go to great lengths to make your stay the best it can possibly be.

The **Westin Resort**, ☎ 843-681-4000, fax 681-1087, www.westin.com, Two Grasslawn Avenue, opened in 1985 within the Port Royal Resort. It features classical architecture reminiscent of grand seaside hotels of the turn of the century. It boasts an enviable 24-acre oceanfront location on Port Royal Sound – the largest watershed in South Carolina, formed by the confluence of seven slow-moving navigable rivers: the Beaufort, Pocotaligo, Tullifiny, Coosawhatchie, Broad, Chechesee and Colleton. Among the 412 guest rooms, including 30 suites, is the magnificent Port Royal Suite, with over 2,046 square feet of space and a private verandah and gazebo overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. Each has a stocked refreshment pantry, safe and an elegantly appointed bathroom. The most selective of you will want to book a room on the Royal Beach Club Floor, where all rooms offer a private balcony with either oceanfront or ocean view. Guests on this floor receive a special gift upon arrival, Continental breakfast, cocktails and refreshments served daily in a private lounge are complimentary, and poolside seating, beach chairs and umbrellas are reserved upon request.

Prices vary between the two seasons, March 7 to November 21 (high season) and November 22 to December 31 (low season). The rates for an Island View Room were $320 in high season and $185 in low season, for an Ocean View Room, $380 and $245, for an Oceanfront Room, $420 and $260, and for the Royal Beach Club Floor, $465 and $300. Suites ranged upwards from $400 during high season and $345 during low season. There are packages, of course, and we suggest that the Great Getaway might be the most appropriate for romantic weekenders. For $299 a night you get a luxurious guest room, daily buffet breakfast, and your choice of one activity from each of two categories of options daily. From Option 1, select an hour

of tennis, a half-day of bike riding for two, or a guided kayak tour for two. From Option 2, select a half-hour massage for two or a round of golf for one.

You will also find an array of restaurants and bars, ranging from formal to very informal, some of which are as follows. The **Barony Grill** is open for dinner each evening from Tuesday to Saturday in season. The delightful **Carolina Café**, open morning, noon and night, is known for a Seafood Extravaganza buffet served nightly and Sunday brunch. It features an interesting décor, including five wall murals that depict historic Lowcountry plantation homes, by Tom Swanston. Outside, look for the **Pelican Poolside Snack Bar**, where, in summer, the sub-tropical ambiance is made more authentic by the mellow beat of island music from a steel band. Just above that is the **Playful Pelican Lounge**, where the specialty is, and you are absolutely certain to enjoy them, exotic cocktails. When passing by here, stop and admire the combination of waterfalls, reflecting pools, landscaped gardens, decks, terraces, and indoor and outdoor pools, bordered by a wide boardwalk that takes you across the sandy dunes to the beach. The sculptures of Walter Palmer will not escape your attention; his human-sized pelicans offer a whimsical diversion in the ponds, along with two real swans.

Recreation in many forms awaits your pleasure. The **Port Royal Golf & Racquet Club** has three award-winning 18-hole championship courses; an award-winning racquet club with 16 tennis courts finished in all three Grand Slam surfaces (grass, Har-tru and hard); a world-class croquet lawn and miles of bicycle and jogging paths. Within the hotel is a newly renovated, fully-equipped fitness center with saunas, steam rooms, state-of-the-art fitness equipment, and a qualified staff to assist you in fitness testing and individualized programs.

The Westin Resort has one more, and rather unusual, attraction to those romantic weekenders who aren't yet married, but are considering that possibility. The chief concierge, Lette O'Sheill, is a notary public and, as such, is legally allowed to wed couples in South Carolina. She performs an average of eight ceremonies each year at this oceanfront location. What's more, she makes arrangements for everything else you might possibly need, and will contract with the resort's audiovisual staff to record the event for you.

The **Hilton Oceanfront Resor**t, ☎ 843-842-8000, fax 341-8033, e-mail hiltonhh@hargray.com, www.hiltonheadhilton.com, located in the 2,200-acre resort community of Palmetto Dunes, is a AAA Four-Diamond Award-winning beachfront paradise that recently underwent a $5.5 million-dollar renovation. Accommodation is available in any one of 324 rooms, including 32 suites, that the management rightfully claims are the largest hotel rooms you will find on Hilton Head Island. Each boasts a king-sized or queen-sized bed, a fully-furnished kitchenette, separate dining and parlor areas, ceiling fan, in-room safe, remote controlled cable TV and in-room movies, a desk/work center furnished with voice mail, speaker phone and dataports and a distinctively casual ambiance. Each also has a private balcony offering breathtaking views of the resort's tropical gardens, the meandering lagoons, or the wide Atlantic Ocean beaches. Complimentary services include valet and self-parking, shuttle transportation within Palmetto Dunes to and from the Shelter Cove Marina, and concierge services.

Regular room rates vary, according to season, from $109 to $239. We would recommend that you ask about The Romance Package, which includes an ocean view room, bottle of champagne and full breakfast in the Palmetto Café, at a high-season price of $264 per couple per night – with an extra night for $219. Between late August and late November this drops to

$244, with an extra night at $199. The rest of the year it will cost you $184 – with extra nights just $109 each.

Restaurants and bars, too, are plentiful. The signature dining room is **Mostly Seafood**, an acclaimed gourmet restaurant; the **Palmetto Café** is open for family dining – even Pizza Hut Pizza – for breakfast, lunch and dinner seven days a week; the **Buoy Bar** offers dining or cocktails poolside; the **Regatta**, during the day and early evening functions as a sports bar and sports a live band Tuesday through Saturday and **The Grocery Deli** offers takeaway goodies for picnicking or snacking in your room.

Activities are equally diverse. If you ever tire of the three miles of private, pristine white sandy beach, you might try the Health Club, complimentary to guests, with its array of Nautilus equipment, outdoor heated family pool, adult pool and two oceanfront whirlpools. Golfers will be in their element as they can choose from courses designed by Robert Trent Jones, George Fazio or Arthur Hills, all of which are available in Palmetto Dunes. Here also is the Palmetto Dunes Tennis Center, one of the top tennis resorts in the country, with grass, clay and Har-Tru courts, six of which are lit for night play.

Daufuskie Island

The **Daufuskie Island Club & Resort**, ☎ 843-842-2000, 800-648-6778, fax 681-3819, www.daufuskieresort.com, is in a central location on a 663-acre tract overlooking Calibogue Sound and the Atlantic Ocean. Reached by way of a 45-minute private ferry ride that departs from Salty Fare Village on Hilton Head Island and accessed through 24-hour guarded privacy gates, the nostalgic antebellum-style building is found at the end of an avenue of majestic moss-draped oaks. Accommodations are either in one of the inn's 52 spacious and well-appointed guest rooms or in a choice of 37 two- or four-bedroom cottages. Rates vary between high and low seasons and, in 1999, were $169 or

$104 per night for a room in the inn proper, $363 or $248 for a Two-Bedroom Ocean View Cottage, and $288 or $223 for a Two-Bedroom Marsh View Cottage. Prices include the ferry ride and club transportation around the island, but a private Cottage Cart will cost an additional $18 per day. Guests also enjoy the opportunity for fine dining at the inn's **Stoddard Room**, which overlooks the ocean, or you can enjoy a casual meal at **Jack's Place**.

Tables for Two

The **Portz**, ☎ 843-842-2400, at the Crowne Plaza Resort, Shipyard Plantation, has a really neat location overlooking the lagoon and a menu created by the internationally trained chef, Mark Moritz. His appetizers include Pan-Fried Salmon Cakes with mustard Hollandaise ($6.95), and Rosemary Charred Carpaccio of Veal ($8.95). Selecting an entrée may be difficult with such tempting options as Pan-Seared Tuna Mignon, with shallot Madeira demi-glace ($19.95); Twin Charred Lobster Tails, with penne pasta and garlic caper cream ($28.95); or Cedar Plank Roasted Salmon, with spiced bacon and pear tarragon relish ($19.95). The desserts are nothing short of decadent. Who could fail to be tempted by Grand Marnier Chocolate Truffle Cake, Milk Chocolate Brulée or Mascarpone Cream Almond Crisp, at $5.50 each. The Portz is open for dinner, daily, from 5 to 10:30 pm, and for Sunday Champagne Brunch – costing $19.95 inclusive of champagne – from midday to 2:30 pm.

The **Tapas Restaurant**, ☎ 843-681-8925, fax 342-3366, emailthetapas@aol.com and www.tapasrestaurant.com, is at 11 Northridge Plaza (just to the right of the Cinema 10). This is a small restaurant with a wonderfully bizarre décor and an equally attractive cuisine. Tapas, in this sense, don't equate to the original Spanish idea of small tidbits of food given free with your drink. Rather, it is the increasingly popular American version, wherein an extensive and highly varied menu offers slightly smaller than normal entrées – thus, allowing your pal-

ate to delight in a medley of different tastes. Although the menu changes often, and there are specials each evening, among which you might be lucky to find such delicacies as Escargot Spinocchi, tender snails sautéed with garlic, spinach and bacon cream sauce ($6.95); Goat Cheese Marinara, baked in a crock with French bread ($6.50); Mushroom/Artichoke Fromage, fresh mushrooms and artichoke hearts in garlic butter with cheese ($6.95); Drake Quesadillas, smoked duck, onion, peppers, and cheddar placed in flour tortilla ($6.50); or Venison with Cranberry and Port, medallions of venison sautéed with port wine and cranberries ($8.95). The wine list, although on the small side, is helpfully descriptive and complements the cuisine.

The **Spartina Grill**, ☎ 843-689-2433 or fax 689-3663, 70 Marshland Road, is refreshingly unusual and rather eclectic. Named after the grass commonly found in the surrounding marshland, this upscale bistro, where you can eat inside or out, has a European décor and specializes in Mediterranean, seafood and California cuisine. Starters include such delights as Plantation Stewpot, sweet potatoes, black-eyed peas, country ham, tomatoes and collard greens in beef broth ($3.95); Grilled Lobster and Asparagus Quesadilla ($8.95); Deviled Crab Fritters, full of local blue crab and served with red pepper jelly ($6.50); and Smoked Trout Cannelloni, applewood-smoked trout-filled pasta in four-cheese sauce ($7.95). House specialties conveniently come in two sizes and feature Marshside Shrimp, stuffed with horseradish, bacon-wrapped and fried and served on sweet onion straws with a bourbon BBQ sauce; and Creole Lamb Loin, marinated in Creole mustard, white wine and rosemary, then grilled on a bed of caramelized onions and garlic (each at $7.95 & $15.50). Other taste tempters include Phoenix Duck, stir-fried duckling, with straw mushrooms, water chestnuts, snow peas and carrot threads in a wonton basket ($7.95 and $12.25), and Black and Blue Cakes, blue crab, black beans, avocados, or Creole spices, pan-fried with bayou tomato sauce ($8.95 and $16.95). The wine list isn't extensive but is varied enough and nearly all are available by the glass. The

Spartina Grill is open for lunch Monday to Friday from 11:30 am to 2:30 pm, and for dinner Monday to Thursday from 5:30 to 9 pm and Friday and Saturday from 5:30 to 10 pm.

CQ's Restaurant, ☎ 843-671-2779, 140 Lighthouse Road, Sea Pines Plantation in Harbour Town, is in one of the oldest buildings on Hilton Head. Reminiscent of a Lowcountry rice barn, it was built by artist/sculptor Ralph Ballantyne in 1970, and features pine floors from an historic Jasper County church, ceiling beams from a Savannah warehouse and a staircase that supposedly came from a house of ill repute in the same city. Three of the dining rooms are named for the rice, indigo and cotton crops once raised on the island, and decorated appropriately. The fourth, and central, dining room, the Plantation Room, features photos and memorabilia from Sea Pines' heritage. The porch is ideal, weather permitting, for alfresco dining, and the bar, with a view over Deer Creek salt marsh, is warmed by a potbelly stove in the winter months.

The cuisine here is inspired by the abundant varieties of fresh seafood, produce, fruits and vegetables available in the region, with signature dishes having French and Cajun influences. Appetizers include Seafood Cassoulet, shrimp, scallops, exotic mushrooms and white beans in asiago cream ($8); Escargot and Shiitake Mushrooms, in shallot white wine butter reduction with chèvre crouton ($9); and French Brie En Croûte, with raspberry compote and baguette crostini ($7). Among the entrées you may enjoy are Caramelized Pan-Seared Alaskan Salmon, with smoked Swiss, toasted nut polenta cake and smoked oven-roasted baby vegetables ($20); Seared Medallions of Cervena Venison, with leek and shallot, Madeira wine reduction, roasted onion, asparagus and mashed potatoes ($24); or Herbs de Provence-Crusted and Honey Laced Rack of Lamb, with chèvre mashed potatoes and haricots verts ($24). The wine list here is extensive, with over 70 offered by the glass. There is also a wide range of martinis, small batch bourbons and classic malts. CQ's is open year-round for dinner seven nights a week from 5 to 10 pm, with Happy Hour between 5 and 6 pm.

Antonio's, ☎ 843-842-5505, G2 Wexford Village, is an Italian restaurant, but with a spotlight on classic Italian seafood from most regions of that country. A wall-sized wine rack demands your attention in the Tuscany Room, connected to the bar by a dual-sided brick fireplace, and romantic Italian music enhances the ambiance. Antipasti include Cozze Fresche Al Vapore, fresh steamed mussels in Roma tomato herb sauce or a white wine lemon butter garlic sauce and toast points ($7); Gamberetti e Calamari, marinated grilled shrimp and calamari with cannellini bean relish ($8); or Melanzana alla Parmigiana, breaded eggplant slices layered with ricotta and parmesan cheeses, marinara sauce and melted mozzarella cheese ($6). Pasta dishes, served with freshly baked bread, include Fettuccine Pomadoro, tomato fettuccine, apple-smoked bacon, asparagus, diced roma tomatoes and pecorino romano cheese ($16); Linguini Con Salsa Vongole, a combination of whole and chopped fresh clams in marinara or white wine, butter, fresh herbs and garlic ($16); and Penne Romano, sweet Italian ground sausage over penne pasta in a Madeira tomato parmesan cream sauce ($14). Among the meat and fish dishes, all served with freshly baked bread, you may come across Anatroccolo, pan-seared breast of duckling with balsamic raspberry port wine glaze, served with mushroom risotto and primavera vegetables ($18); Agnello Arrosto, herb-encrusted New Zealand rack of lamb with fresh mint Chianti wine reduction, served with garlic parmesan mashed potatoes and primavera vegetables ($26); Vitello Picatta, veal scaloppine sautéed with capers, white wine and lemon butter, served with sautéed fresh spinach and mushroom risotto ($18); or Cioppino, featuring mussels, clams, calamari, fresh fish and shrimp simmered in Roma tomato pernod herb broth, served with garlic toast points and shrimp risotto ($20). Antonio's is open year-round seven days a week, from 5 to 10 pm; happy hour is from 5 to 7 pm.

The **Old Fort Pub**, ☎ 843-681-2386, 65 Skull Creek Drive, Hilton Head Plantation, is adjacent to Fort Mitchel and has fantastic views over Skull Creek and the Intracoastal Waterway. The foyer is decorated with enlarged historic photos of the

Union troops that occupied the island, with accompanying narratives describing life during Civil War times. The glass-enclosed main dining room features a water view from each table, and is tastefully furnished with 20th-century antiques and reproductions. A really unusual feature of this restaurant is the rooftop "widow's walk," which you are encouraged to reach, glass in hand, via a spiral staircase from the Sunset Dining Room. And the view, especially at sunset, is well worth the effort. The cuisine, as you will soon see, is best described as Southern-influenced American. To begin, you might try Smoked Summer Sausage and White Bean Succotash, with shaved asiago cheese and frizzled leeks ($7); Escargot and Lobster Ravioli, with garlic shallot butter and romano crouton ($10); or Duck Confit Fried Portobello, with Vermont white cheddar, balsamic syrup and garlic thyme infused oil ($10). Interesting salads range from $5 to $8, and the main course selection could include Mesquite-Smoked Filet Mignon, with exotic mushroom cabernet sauce, served with roasted garlic bread pudding ($26); Skull Creek Medley, Lowcountry crab cakes, blackened prawns, and grilled fillet of fish with spiced aioli and tomato coulis, served with mustard seed butter cream rice ($24); and Shrimp Pyramid, served with arborio rice, roasted peppers, corn and Holland gouda and shrimp glacé ($22). The wine choice here is rather novel and innovative in presentation. The Old Fort Pub has designed four flights of wines, offering three-ounce servings of three different wines so you can experience a variety of styles and tastes with your menu selections. Alternatively, you may choose a 3 oz. glass, a 6 oz. glass or a bottle. The Old Fort Pub is open year-round. Lunch is served Monday to Saturday from noon to 2:30 pm; Sunday brunch is served from 11 am to 2:30 pm; and dinner hours, every day, are from 5:30 to 10 pm in summer and 5 to 9 pm in winter.

The **Boathouse II Restaurant & Marker 13**, ☎ 843-681-3663, at 397 Squire Pope Road next to Schilling's Marina, overlooks Skull Creek, which is part of the Intracoastal Waterway. Creative variations on classic Lowcountry dishes and Southern favorites are served in a glass-enclosed dining room that allows glorious views and features a massive fireplace. The room

is decorated with trophy fish and marine life murals. In agreeable weather, dine alfresco on one of the extensive decks, where you will also find Marker 13. The large covered bar offers appropriate fare from a separate menu, and live music six nights a week from May through October. As you might expect, seafood dominates the dinner menu. Appetizers include Carolina Crab Chowder (cup $3.75 or bowl $4.75) and the Bloomin' Sweet Onion, a colossal sweet onion coated with secret spices, lightly fried, served with horseradish dipping sauce ($6.25), an interesting deviation from fishy fare. Entrées sure to tempt are Savannah Shrimp, sweet shrimp, andouille sausage, diced tomato and peppers, served with creamy stone ground grits ($8.25); Admiral's Oysters, oysters, garlic, leeks and lemon herb broth in a tomato basil bread boule ($7.95); fried shrimp, scallops or oysters, your choice of one, served with coleslaw and fries ($15.95, try any two for $16.95 or take all three for $17.95); or Broiled Seafood Platter, shrimp, scallops, fish and homemade crab cake, broiled in white wine butter sauce, topped with herbed bread crumbs, and served with blended rice and fresh vegetables ($18.95). The Boathouse II, open seven days, serves lunch from 11:30 am to 3 pm, Sunday brunch from 11:30 am to 3 pm, and dinner from 5 to 10 pm. Happy Hour is from 4 to 7 pm.

At **Juleps Restaurant**, ☎ 843-842-5857, 14 Greenwood Drive in The Galley of Shops, owners/operators Sam and Melissa Cochran have created a warm and welcoming ambiance. Opened in 1991, it is also one of only three restaurants on Hilton Head Island that belong to the Chaine des Rotisseurs, the oldest and largest gourmet organization in the world. Consequently, as you might well expect, the menu is wide and varied. Expect appetizers such as Oysters and Artichokes Mornay, plump oysters and artichoke hearts with a savory Mornay sauce in puff pastry ($7.25); Barbecued Duck Breast, grilled duck breast sliced and served with a cornmeal pancake, barbecue sauce and a dab of sour cream ($7.75); and Smoked Chicken Ravioli with Crawfish, ravioli filled with smoked chicken in sherry cream sauce ($7.25). As well as a nice selection of soups and salads, there are pastas such as Jumbo Shrimp Scampi

Florentine, large shrimp sautéed with garlic, lemon, white wine and fresh leaf spinach served on a bed of angel hair pasta, sprinkled with Parmesan; or Veal Fricassee with Oysters and Artichokes, thin strips of veal with oysters and artichokes on a bed of spinach linguini with savory Mornay sauce (each at $17.95). Non-seafood entrées include steaks; Grilled Double Loin Lamb Chops, served with a raspberry horseradish sauce ($19.95); Veal Smithfield, thin slices of veal sautéed with mushrooms and country ham in light cream sauce ($16.95); or Roasted Stuffed Quail, two quail stuffed with andouille sausage and greens ($17.95). If your preference is seafood or fish, then the seafood entrées will certainly entice. Choose from Sautéed Trout 'Nawlins, whole rainbow trout, lightly seasoned and sautéed with shrimp and crawfish in Creole mustard sauce ($16.95); Calibogue Seafood Medley, shrimp, scallops, fish, oysters, and crawfish in a smoked sausage and shrimp sauce served with crab fritters ($18.95); or Pan-Seared Salmon Salad, served on a bed of greens with a black-eyed pea cake, asparagus, tomatoes, onions and balsamic vinaigrette ($16.25). In addition to a wide selection of wines, Juleps has some great specialty drinks, including, of course, mint juleps.

Shops, Spas, etc.

You guys will surely not need telling by now that beautiful roses are guaranteed to put your loved one in a romantic mood. So, before arriving at Hilton Head Island, place a call to **Lisa Schuker Wildflowers**, ☎ 843-785-5551, 841 South Island Square, Highway 278, and arrange for a dozen, or maybe more, to be waiting in your room at the hotel. If you really want to impress, have a dozen more delivered to your restaurant of choice; then sit back and wait for that look of surprise on her face.

Champagne, of course, can add sparkle and a celebratory flare to a romantic weekend, and **Warehouse Liquors** is the place to find it. They are in the Mid-Island at Plantation Center, ☎ 843-686-5333. Besides a wide selection of the bubbly stuff,

including attractive box sets, they carry a fine array of wines – both domestic and international – including many rare items not easily found, vintage ports, liquors and domestic and imported beers.

We found a really wonderful day spa on Hilton Head Island. The **European Spa**, ☎ 843-842-WELL (9355), fax 842-2456 or e-mail eurospa@hargray.com, is at 115 Executive Center, Corpus Christie, New Orleans Road. They offer the widest array of aromatherapy treatments we have seen, for women, men or couples. Owner Elizabeth McGinnes, an Englishwoman and the International Representative to the National Association of Holistic Aromatherapy, ensures that all of her staff is trained in Clinical Aromatherapy. Body Wraps, for which you should allow 1¾ hours, come in the Exfoliating Spearmint, Seaweed, and Marine Mud Envelopment varieties, and cost $85 each. An Aromatherapy Body Treatment, which takes two hours and costs $100, includes hydrotherapy tub, wrap, and body, face and scalp massage. Body Rubs are also a popular item. The Stress Buster – a Full Body Sea Salt Scrub followed by a Hydrotherapy Tub with seaweed extracts and essential oils, and the Detox and Tone – a Full Body Spearmint Exfoliation Scrub, Underwater Massage and a European Toning Treatment – each lasts one hour and costs $70. Patrons may choose from a number of different massages priced at $50 for 45 minutes, $65 for one hour, and $90 for 1½ hours. And, to make sure you are covered from top to bottom, Reflexology for feet, scalp and hands, and Deluxe Aromatherapy hand and foot care are also on offer. For the last word in pampering, ladies will enjoy Elizabeth's Ultimate Spa package, described as a half-day treatment, but in reality taking nearly five hours. First, you will unwind and revitalize in a Hydrotherapy Tub with aromatic oils. An Aromatherapy Body Wrap and full Aromatherapy Facial then precede a healthy snack and herbal tea. Hands and feet are attended to next and, for the finale you will be treated to the benefits of an Aromatherapy Body Massage. The cost is $205. Alternatively, The Royal Treatment, A Regal Spa Day, takes about 6½ hours, will set you back $285, and adds to the half-day package a Sea Salt Scrub, Body Wrap

of choice, Deluxe Paraffin Wax Hand and Foot Treatment, a choice of facial, lunch, light refreshments, and herbal tea.

Our Suggestion: As this is a romantic weekend, opt for a Treat Meant for Two, where $260 per couple will buy you three hours of fun and relaxation. Luxuriate together in a hydrotherapy bath with salts and aromatic oils, then take a seaweed or warm mud body wrap, a face and scalp treatment and finish off, side by side, with a full aromatherapy massage, before relaxing with a cup of herbal tea.

Speaking of relaxation, why not take some home with you? Well, perhaps you can't buy relaxation, but vegging out in a hammock can be like a miniature vacation in your back yard. The **Hammock Company**, ☎ 800-344-4264, www.hhisc.com/hammock, at Coligny Plaza, stocks every kind of hammock, hammock stand and accessory you can think of, as well as swings, chairs and a fine selection of Adirondack wooden furniture. Also look for wind chimes, Stone Garden ornaments, copper mailboxes, flags, all kinds of bird feeders, indoor fountains, books, and really neat cypress wood doormats.

Nature, obviously, plays a very important role on Hilton Head Island, and there are two stores here that will be of interest to visitors.

In the **Audubon Nature Store**, ☎ 843-785-4311, fax 785-6402, e-mail trunbt@aol.com and www.audubonnature.com, at the J2 Village at Wexford, proprietress Suzanne Trunk has assembled an array of enticing goods guaranteed to fascinate. Look for such things as brass and copper sculptures, wind chimes, frogs of all types, fluffy toys including life-sized dogs and cats, indoor fountains, CDs and tapes, jewelry, birdfeeders and seed, birdhouses, and houses for butterflies, ladybugs and bats. Those of you with kids at home will want to pay particular attention to the very large, and largely educative, children's section. If you want to both amuse them and stretch their minds, then look for the science and nature activity kits, rocks,

crystals and crystal growing kits, glow in the dark items, games, puzzles – including the Triazzel – action toys, a dinosaur department and, for really up-to-date youngsters, CD ROMs and other multimedia stuff.

Those of you who take great delight in watching, and feeding, the birds in your back yard will not want to overlook **Wild Birds Unlimited**, ☎ 843-681-4461, in the Festival Center at Indigo Park, 45 Pembroke Drive, Suite 130. These stores, as you may know, are franchised, but that does not limit the owner/proprietor from bringing a unique personality, through décor and selection of stock, to his/her particular store. Certainly, there will be bird feeders of every shape and size, birdhouses, feed and all kinds of accessories, but from that common ground, the items stocked can vary rather surprisingly. In this store, you can expect to find a wonderful selection of enamel and copper birds, pelicans, dolphins and fish; J. W. Stannard hand-tuned wind chimes; birdhouse jewelry; Andy Brinkley copper bird feeders; bat and woodpecker houses; small decoys; a squirrel station; a tortoise and frog corner; lamp stands, bell rings; decorative outdoor water faucets; clocks; binoculars and CDs and tapes. Two items that particularly caught our attention were the Windway Sounds of Nature Monitor – which includes a microphone to be placed beneath a birdfeeder and a receiver that mounts indoors for listening to the birds feeding; and unique mail boxes featuring a yacht and a duck.

There is one place on Hilton Head Island that you should certainly find the time to visit. As the name implies, **Swiss-Time**, ☎/fax 843-842-9500, 32-0 Shelter Cove Lane, at the Plaza at Shelter Cove, in fact, specializes in time. Owner/operator Peter Baier, a Swiss native and the island's only Certified Master Watchmaker, began his training at age 14 in a four-year (45-hour-per-week) apprenticeship program in both Switzerland and Germany. He subsequently worked for jewelers in both of those countries and in New York, developing a specialty in Rolex watches. Finally striking out on his own, he settled in St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands, where he designed and manufactured the immensely popular Orbit Watch. In 1982, alarmed by a rising crime rate and expanding population, he decided the

time was ripe for a change. Through the recommendation of a friend, he wound up on Hilton Head Island, and, except for a brief time in Sweden, has been here ever since.

Peter specializes in the repair and service of every major brand of watch. He estimates parts and inventory in excess of $50,000 for Rolex watches alone. So, if you have a watch that needs repairing this is the place to come; rather than a factory turnaround time of four to eight weeks, Peter can do most repairs in his workshop in just two to three days. There is more, though, that keeps Peter's business ticking over. He still turns his hands to designing watches – the first Rolex Ring Watch in 18 Karat Gold and a line for the Royal Caribbean Cruise Line, for example. And, in addition to selling new watches – including the Rolex Daytona Cosmograph and the Patek Phillipe Rolex, each valued at $20,000 – he buys, sells and trades quality and vintage watches and clocks.

While we will acknowledge that many of these timepieces are out of the average person's price range, don't let that dissuade you from visiting Swiss Time. There were on display, when we visited, many, many attractive watches in a more affordable price range. And, a goodly number of those are brands not found easily in this country. Look for a wide range of Victorinox Swiss Army Watches or their less common cousin the official Swiss Air Force Watch, and a selection of knives and key rings.

Even those who may not be immediately in the market for a watch will enjoy visiting with characterful and charming host Peter Baier in his home away from home. Pictures, postcards and prints of his beloved, picturesque homeland abound, and cuckoo clock aficionados will delight in an entire wall of original cuckoo clocks from the Black Forest. Also of interest are the numerous displays of antique watches of every kind imaginable. It is likely, though, that you will linger longer than you expect, and many, having succumbed to the temptation to purchase a new watch, can truly say that they left "strapped for time." Not to worry though. True romantics know it is perfectly acceptable to be fashionably late.

Kiawah Island

History

The lovely island of Kiawah, located 21 miles south of Charleston, gleans its name from the Native American tribe who once hunted, fished and resided upon its fertile lands. The arrival of the white man, however, with their deadly guns and diseases to which the Indians had no natural resistance, brought death in various forms to many and enslavement to those who survived.

At the very end of the 17th century, in 1699 to be exact, the Lords Proprietors, exhibiting questionable wisdom, granted title of the island to a certain George Raynor, who, documentary evidence suggests, was a pirate. Nevertheless, his family retained control of the island until 1719, following which a turbulent 50-year period saw ownership change numerous times. The Vanderhorst family, who retained title for the next two centuries, then purchased it. During the epic events of those years, it was used as a place of rest and recreation for wounded junior officers in the Revolutionary War and, during the War of 1812, as a garrison for soldiers assigned to protect the city of Charleston. It was also in that city, on April 2, 1861, that the first shots of the Civil War were fired. During the hostilities, perhaps in answer to that initial insult, Union troops adorned the walls of the Vanderhorst mansion with their version of graffiti, and this can still be seen today.

Following that war, Arnoldous Vanderhost IV returned home and, with the assistance of what slaves remained, resumed planting before 1880. He met an unfortunate end, however, falling victim to a hunting accident, and sightings of his ghost have been reported about the island on numerous occasions. His son, Arnoldous V, achieved very little success in his attempts to work the plantation and, from that time forward, members of the family rarely returned to Kiawah.

In 1951, in a very astute business move, C. C. Royal, a lumberman, purchased the island for the miserly sum of $125,000. The true depth of his discernment was verified 23 years later, when he sold it to a resort developer for $18.2 million! Since that date in 1974, this beautiful 10,000-acre island has been sculpted into the world-acclaimed Kiawah Island Golf & Tennis Resort, a AAA Four-Diamond award winner.

Once you pass through the security gates and into the privacy of this subtropical wonderland there is no need to venture elsewhere. Everything you could possibly want, and more, is here awaiting your discovery – a classy 150-room inn, 530 villas and private homes for rent, five world-class championship golf courses, a pair of award-winning tennis complexes, the 21-acre Night Heron Park, an eclectic array of specialty stores, and no less than nine restaurants and lounges. The mixture of lush flora and fauna includes forests of tall pines, palmetto palms, magnolias and live oaks, and among the natural inhabitants are 193 species of birds, 30 species of reptiles and amphibians, and 18 species of mammals. These attributes and 10 miles of gloriously undisturbed Atlantic beachfront make Kiawah Island a paradise indeed for a very special romantic weekend.

Things to Do

The question here is not what to do, but where do you start? The choices are so varied that you will probably be unable to do everything on your first weekend visit.

To begin with the basics, you will want to spend at least some time on the wonderfully pristine beach. Romantic weekenders will appreciate the relative privacy afforded by the over 10 miles of beachfront, more than any other planned community of similar size in the United States. Running east to west, these are so lengthy that points of reference are designated by mile markers in the dunes! Strolling here, hand-in-hand, it is easy to understand why *National Geographic Traveler* named Kiawah Island "one of the two most romantic vacation spots on the East Coast." Whether searching for shells, sand dollars and

conchs by day, and watching dolphins frolic in the surf, or stealing kisses and caresses in the shimmering moonlight, you will surely lose your hearts again and again to each other in this magical place. If you want company, then that can be arranged too. The resort hosts beach parties, with hayrides, bonfires and live musical entertainment. Conveniently, umbrellas, chairs, sailboards, catamarans, kayaks and rafts can be rented at the beach, ☎ 843-768-6098.

Kiawah Island Resort recognizes that many guests will want to become more familiar with the island's natural wildlife and topography. To assist in this endeavor, a staff of naturalists operates an acclaimed nature program that will sensitize you to intricacies of the fascinating barrier island environment. Begin in the **Nature Room at Heron Park Center**, ☎ 843-768-6001 (or Ext. 6001 if calling from your room), open Monday through Friday from 8:30 am to 11 pm and on Saturday and Sunday from 8:30 am to 9 pm. On view are local snakes, lizards, turtles, a young alligator and other creatures of the salt marsh, as well as a ghoulish collection of bones and skulls.

Also on hand at the Heron Park Center is a fitness room and a game room including billiards, foosball and air hockey. Bicycles can be rented either from the Heron Park Center office, located next to the basketball court, or at West Beach next to the Cougar Point Pro Shop, with both locations open daily from 8:30 am to 7 pm.

The decision that comes next may be very difficult; which of the many tours and workshops do you sign up for? **Walking Tours** include the two-hour excursions, Birds of Kiawah and Beginning Birding; the 1½-hour Gators-N-Y'all, which explores the life of the largest reptiles in the United States; and Night Walks, discussing nocturnal creatures, constellations and the wonders of bioluminescence. Individually, these tours are priced at $3 per person. Alternatively, the two-hour Island Sampler, at $7 per person, delves into the secrets of the maritime forest, allows time for shelling along the beach, and gives an introduction to all manner of island creatures. A pair of Biking Tours is on offer: Biking into History and Wildlife in the

Wetlands, each of which lasts two hours and costs $7 per person ($11 with a bike rental).

Also of interest are a number of **presentations and workshops**. The Loggerhead Crawl, at $5 per person, gives an opportunity for participation in loggerhead turtle nest relocation and provides information on what can be done to protect this endangered species. The innovative one-hour Ocean Seining fosters first-hand discovery of local marine life. Participants pull a 30-foot net through the surf, then examine their "catch" in a view tank before releasing. The cost is just $3 per person.

Canoeing and **kayaking** excursions are enjoying a resurgence in popularity, so you may wish to try the 2½-hour Back River Excursion or the two-hour Marsh Creek Canoeing, $18 and $16 per person respectively. Kayaking options are 2½ hours of Marsh Kayaking at $30 per person or Ocean Kayaking at $35 per person.

Those interested in **fishing** expeditions will want to hook up with the Basics of Fly-Fishing, a catch and release program, at $10 per person, or the Saltwater Fly-Fishing Field Trip at $45 per person. The latter, however, requires some familiarity with navigating a canoe.

Swimming, with three pools on-site, is another popular pastime at the Kiawah Island Resort. The largest is 25-meter Junior Olympic Night Heron Park Pool, Ext. 4070, which is open Sunday to Friday from 9 am to 10 pm and Saturday 9 am to 8 pm. The 60-foot Turtle Point Pool, Ext. 4056, is open similar hours; and the Inn Pool Complex, Ext. 2066, an ocean-front complex, is open daily from 9 am to 11 pm.

As sports at Kiawah go, however, **golf** is the most conspicuous. In fact, even non-golfing visitors will be keenly aware of this resort's worldwide fame as regards that particular sport. And golfers can sample the modern golf course architecture of five masters. The most famous course is undoubtedly Pete Dye's 7,300-yard **Ocean Course**, ☎ 843-768-2121, Ext. 5300, which offers amazing views along 2½ miles of spectacular Atlantic Ocean scenery. Just months after its opening in 1991 it was catapulted tolegendary success by the Ryder Cup matches, which

became known as the "War by the Shore." Millions of viewers watched entranced as Bernhard Langer's six-foot putt, the last shot on the last hole of the last match of the last day, narrowly missed the cup, resulting in a European defeat and the return of the Ryder Cup to America. In November of 1997 it hosted the 43rd World Cup and again commanded the golfing world's attention as the top two players from 32 countries were locked in a four-day battle for the championship. The rates to play here vary between $114 and $149. Other courses on the island are the 6,840-yard **Osprey Point**, ☎ 843-768-2121, Ext. 4071, designed by Tom Fazio; Jack Nicklaus' legendary 6,899-yard **Turtle Point**, ☎ 843-768-2121, Ext. 4050; and the newest, **Cougar Point**, ☎ 843-768-2121, Ext. 1710, a 6,830-yard course designed by South African Gary Player. Rates for these latter three courses vary between $87 and $114. Alternatively, just off the island at Haulover Creek, is Clyde Johnston's Scottish-American-style **Oak Point**, ☎ 843-768-7431, at 6,759 yards and with green fees ranging from $46 to $80.

Tennis fanatics, too, are courted. In fact, the superior facilities earned accolades from *Tennis* magazine, which ranked Kiawah among the "Ten Greatest US Tennis Resorts." The **East Beach Tennis Club**, ☎ 843-768-2121, Ext. 4010, located across from the Town Center, features 14 clay (composition) and two lighted Har-tru courts. The **West Beach Tennis Club**, ☎ 843-768-2121 Ext. 1720, found close to the Inn, has nine clay (composition) courts – one of which is lighted, and three hard courts – also with one lighted. A neat invention, and certainly easing strain on the back, is a zoned practice court where the ball machine has an automated retrieval system. And you will love the price; guests are entitled to one hour of complimentary court time per day at either of these clubs.

For couples interested in **boating**, a variety of small craft are available for hire through the resort. If, however, you are interested in venturing a bit farther afield, we refer you to the Seabrook Island chapter of this guide, where you will find information on Bohicket Marina, home to **Bohicket Boat Adventure & Tour Co.** and **Bohicket Yacht Charters** both of whom specialize in a variety of boating adventures.

Sweet Dreams

The **Kiawah Island Inn**, ☎ 843-768-2121, 800-654-2924, fax 768-6054, www.kiawah-island.com, is at 12 Kiawah Beach Drive, Kiawah Island, SC 29455. It consists of 150 guest rooms in four lodges – two overlooking the Atlantic Ocean and two overlooking scenic lagoons. Rooms are well appointed, modern in décor, and each features bathrobes, alarm clock, television, telephone with dataport, refrigerator and mini bar. In 1999, off-season rates, between January 1 and March 3 and between November 14 and December 31, varied from $95 to $170 per night. High season, March 4 to November 13, commanded rates of $140 to $260. Outdoors, an oceanfront putting green allows golf enthusiasts to get a little practice and enjoy the pretty views.

Kiawah Island Villas are located either near the inn at the West Beach Village or at the East Beach Village, which is close to Night Heron Park. Option categories include: the number of bedrooms (one to four), and the choice of view (Scenic, Ocean Side and the more desirable Ocean View). Villas are uniquely decorated, and each offers a spacious living room, full kitchen, dining room, bedroom and sundeck or screened porch. Our recommendation for romantic weekenders is a one-bedroom Ocean View which, at West Beach Village, rents for $105 to $315, or, at East Beach Village, $110 to $320. Romantic vacationers will want to know that discounted rates are available for those renting by the week.

The **Resort Homes of Kiawah Island** can be truly spectacular, though they are better suited to those planning a more extended stay than a weekend. For those with the luxury of time, this is the way to go. A week's stay in an oceanfront home ranges from $1,800 to $10,000.

Rates quoted for the inn, villas and resort homes are exclusive of tax and the daily service charge of $6 for an inn room, or 6% for a villa. They do include, though, complimentary on-demand transportation about the island, one hour of free tennis, discounts of up to $45 off a round of golf, complimentary use of the

resort's pools and exclusive use of the Kiawah Island Inn Pool Complex.

To reach Kiawah Island by car, if coming from the north approach the Charleston area on I-95 South and/or I-26 East to I-526 West. Take 17 South, travel about five miles, turn left onto Main Road and follow the signs to the Kiawah Island Resort. When coming from the south, follow I-95 North to 17 North (Charleston Exit 33). Clocking from the point where 17 turns into a four-lane highway, travel nine miles, turn right onto Main Road and follow the signs to the Kiawah Island Resort.

Tables for Two

As with other facilities at the Kiawah Island Golf & Tennis Resort, guests are spoiled when it comes to eateries – there are eight on the island!

The newest and the most luxurious is the **Dining Room** at Osprey Point, in the Osprey Point Clubhouse. Here, in an elegant ambiance enhanced by antiques, other exquisite furnishings and paintings, breakfast is available from 7 to 11 am; lunch is offered between 11:30 am and 2:30 pm; and dinner, à la carte or prix-fixe menu, is served from 6 to 8 pm. First courses include Seared American Foie Gras, with a 25-year-old Balsamic vinegar and a savory roasted duck and Smithfield ham potato croquette ($18.95); and Roasted Duckling, with black beans, peppers, Provolone cheese and spices wrapped in a grilled flour tortilla, accompanied with avocados and a jalapeño beurre blanc ($9.95). Mouth watering entrées include Double Cut Rosemary and Honey Dijon-Crusted Australian Lamb chops, with a thyme infused lamb reduction and tomato risotto ($26.95); or Lobster- and Cheese-Filled Raviolis, with sautéed leeks, tomatoes and shiitake mushrooms, finished with a chive and black truffle butter sauce ($23.95). As an added bonus for romantic weekenders, dinner is prepared on weekends by the AAA Five-Diamond-rated chef, Matthew Neiser. Sunday brunch is a delight also and is served between 11 am and 2:30 pm.

In the Kiawah Island Inn overlooking the Atlantic is the **Jasmine Porch**, where you will find the island's only daily full-service buffet breakfast between 6:30 and 11 am, and where lunch is served from 11:30 am to 2:30 pm, Monday to Saturday. Specialties of fresh local ocean fish and seafood and grilled Angus beef highlight the dinner menu between 6 and 10 pm Thursday through Saturday. Appropriate spirited accompaniments are found among the fine selection of American vintages which make up the wine list. Romantic weekenders will certainly want to sample the Champagne Buffet Brunch on Sunday between midday and 2:30 pm – a bubbly affair, featuring a She-Crab Soup Station, a carving station, selections of tasty salmon, chicken and beef and a Seafood Boat that will set your mind swimming.

The **Indigo House** serves up exciting interpretations of contemporary cuisine with Mediterranean and Northern Italian influences in a casual atmosphere. Look for homemade pastas and savory beef, poultry and seafood selections. Dishes are suitably complemented by vintages from an extensive wine list, with many offered by the glass. Indigo House is open for dinner only, between 5:30 and 9:30 pm, with the bar open between 5 and 11 pm.

If you fancy breakfast, 7 to 11 am, or lunch, 11:30 am to 3 pm, then avail yourselves of the lovely ocean and golf course view at the suitably named the **Ocean Course Restaurant**. Our choice of seating, weather providing, is outside on the veranda. If you are in the mood for just your favorite drink, visit the restaurant bar between 11 am and 5 pm.

The **Topsider Lounge** is the place to go for a bit of fun and relaxation between 5 pm and 1 am. On offer are a full range of sandwiches, delectable appetizers, a fine selection of imported cigars from the humidor and three 52-inch TVs showing your favorite sporting events.

Our favorite for light fare is the oceanside open-air **Sundancer Grill**, with a tempting array of grilled burgers, nachos, fresh fruit plates and crudité platters.

Our Suggestion: Time your visit for an early evening cocktail and request a seat on the upper deck, which offers simply stunning vistas of the sun setting over the Atlantic Ocean.

Weather permitting, the Sundancer is open from 10:30 am to sunset.

In the Straw Market you will come across the **Sweetgrass Café**, which is open for lunch, 11 am to 5 pm, and for dinner, Thursday to Saturday, from 5 to 10 pm. Here, in a casual atmosphere, you will find a tempting selection of crisply fried seafood, grilled meats, pasta dishes, sandwiches and delicious homemade desserts. Also on offer are a wide selection of beers and wines by the glass.

The **Night Heron Grill**, as you might deduce, is found in the Night Heron Park Recreation Complex. It is open seasonally, and weather permitting, from 10:30 am to sunset, and serves a variety of salads, sandwiches and frozen specialty drinks, which can be enjoyed relaxing by the pool or on the terrace.

Maybe, though, you have other recreational activities on your mind and would rather eat in your room. If that is the case, we offer two options. The **Kiawah Pizzeria**, open 11 am to 9 pm, offers a choice of freshly baked pizzas, pasta dishes, hot Italian subs, salads, frozen yogurt and Italian desserts – to be taken in the charming indoor/outdoor courtyard or to be taken away. Alternatively, between 7 am to 9 pm, in the Town Center at the island's only market, you can stock up with groceries, beer, wine, freshly baked bread and sweet treats, or freshly made sandwiches from the deli. In other words, you will find anything you two might want for a feast in the privacy of your room.

Shops, Spas, etc.

You don't have to venture off of Kiawah Island to find those extras that make for a special romantic weekend. In the Straw Market is an array of specialty shops that should meet your every need. Here you can purchase a memento of your visit; add

garden art, fountains, birdbaths or bird feeders to your yard; or get a head start on Christmas shopping. Perhaps you are of a mind to add some fine apparel, formal or casual, to your wardrobe, get your hair styled or even have an informal portrait made.

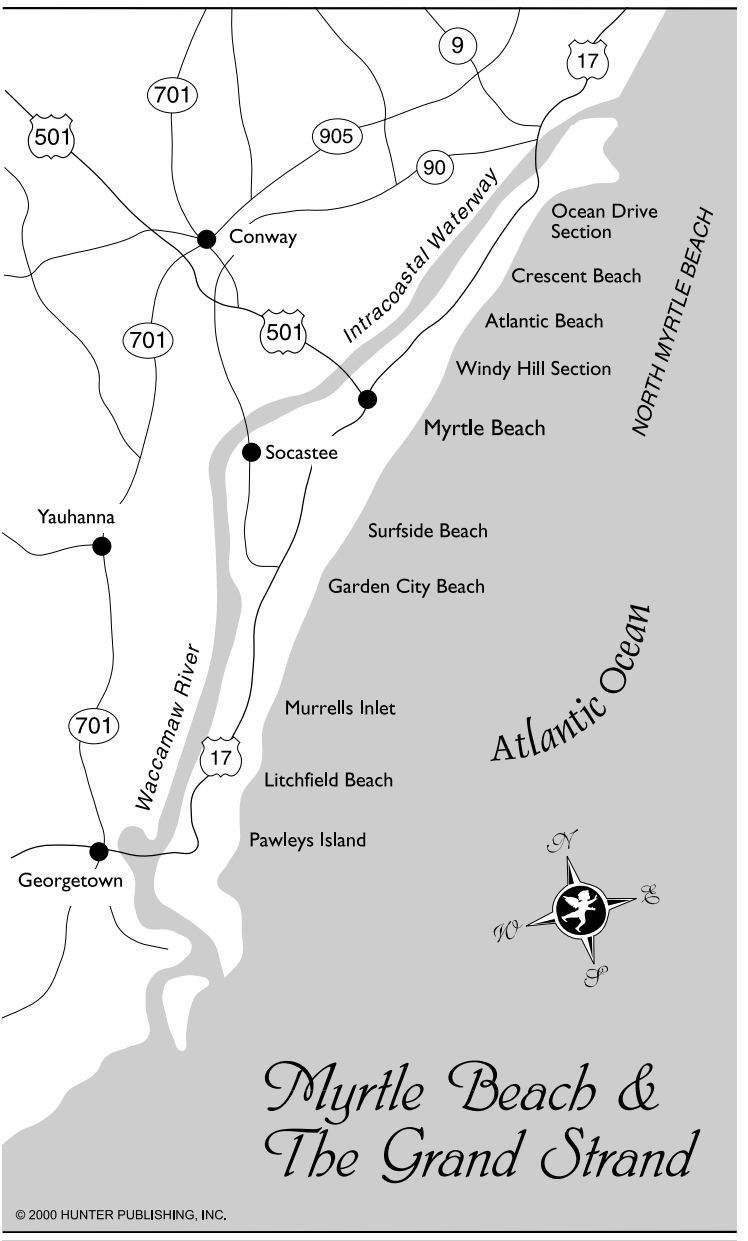
Our Suggestion: Make an appointment with **Kiawah Therapeutic Massage**, ☎ 843-768-2030, at the Kiawah Island Inn, for a relaxing treatment of your choosing. A one-hour massage costs $65, and an extra half-hour can be added for a very reasonable $25. Facial massages, using the new Belaví technique, cost $90 a session, and a combined 30-minute massage therapy is priced at $120.

Myrtle Beach

The Grand Strand, a 60-mile stretch of beach reaching from the North Carolina State line to Georgetown, has its fair share of history. Most of that, though, centers on Georgetown County, to the south, and is described in detail in the Georgetown chapter. We will focus here, then, on the history of the area's beaches themselves.

History

Until the turn of the 20th century, the beaches of Horry County were largely uninhabitable due to their geographical inaccessibility and the poor economy. This began to change, albeit slowly, in 1901 when the Burroughs & Collins Company, a timber firm with extensive beachfront land, built the beach's first hotel, the Seaside Inn. Visitors were encouraged to travel to the inn on a new railroad that had been built originally for use in timber transport. The fledgling community was called "New Town" and, as incredible as it now seems, oceanfront lots sold for just $25! What's more, citizens who constructed a house valued at $500 or more were given an extra lot free. New Town, though, wasn't deemed an inspirational name for an up-and-coming resort, so the local newspaper, the *Horry Herald*, held a



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contest to rename the town. Coincidentally or not, and who will ever know, the winner was Mrs. F.E. Burroughs – yes, you've guessed it, the wife of the founder of Burroughs & Collins. Having noticed the many wax myrtle trees growing wild on the beach, her winning entry was "Myrtle Beach." And, while on the topic of names, it is said that Claude Dunnagan, a gossip and publicity columnist for the weekly, *The Myrtle Beach Sun*, originated the name "Grand Strand" in 1949.

In 1925 a major advancement in tourism was made when John T. Woodside, a textile magnate from Greenville, SC, planned an upscale resort, called Arcady, at the north end of the beach. This featured the Grand Strand's first golf course, the legendary Ocean Forest Hotel, and was the birthplace of the famous magazine *Sports Illustrated*. In 1936, pleasure boats and commercial shipping began using the newly opened Intracoastal Waterway and, just two years later, Myrtle Beach was incorporated. The Air Force Base, used for training and coastal patrols during World War II, was built here in the early 1940s and remained open until 1993. Myrtle Beach, elevated to city status in 1957, reaped the benefits of the 1960s golf boom – a trend that continues to this day, and the Grand Strand, in turn, became a nationally famous resort, with a burgeoning infrastructure to match.

When we first visited Myrtle Beach on our honeymoon in 1975, we found a place with two characters. The downtown area, with funfairs and other similar flashy attractions, and North Myrtle Beach, with upmarket hotels, plush golf courses and miles of beautiful beaches. We didn't return to the area in the intervening near quarter-century.

When setting out to research this guide in 1997, we realized immediately that Myrtle Beach had grown significantly in size and scope. Even so, we were totally surprised at exactly how much and in what manner it had grown. Our first clue came when, out of curiosity, we tried to locate the hotel we had stayed in those many years ago, at the time a magnificent new Hilton in North Myrtle Beach. We caught on very quickly that Myrtle Beach had grown so much that it had literally swallowed North Myrtle Beach and now stretches nearly to the state line. Upon

a subsequent trip in 1999, we finally found our hotel. It is no longer a Hilton, however, having been bought by the Wyndham group in 1998. We set out to reacquaint ourselves with Myrtle Beach, and the changes we found were phenomenal, to say the least.

Today's Myrtle Beach hosts over 13,000,000 visitors annually, has over 490 hotels – with many more under construction, lists approximately 1,500 places to eat, is home to 102 golf courses and 46 more miniature golf courses, and boasts 11 live entertainment theaters that seat a total of 17,700 people. Adding to this array are other places of entertainment, including a wonderful aquarium, an alligator adventure, a NASCAR Speedpark, a number of water parks, and a zoo – to name a few.

Things to Do

When you are not frolicking on the miles and miles of glorious beaches, the name of the game in Myrtle Beach is entertainment. Also, it seems that in this day and age Americans go to the beach to shop. Corporations, not slow to recognize such trends, have constructed over 200 factory outlet stores in the area and numerous malls.

Not content with ordinary shopping, enterprising entrepreneurs have created two all-purpose complexes. **Broadway at the Beach**, Highway 17 Bypass, between 21st and 29th Avenue's, features more than a hundred unique specialty shops, 16 restaurants – including the Hard Rock Café, NASCAR Café and Planet Hollywood, the Palace Theater, Ripley's Aquarium, an IMAX theater, and Celebrity Square, a New Orleans style night club district. And there is a 23-acre freshwater lake right in the center of it! In 1996 the complex earned the state's top tourism award; a year later it won the state's top honor, the South Carolina Governor's Cup, and it was recently chosen by *Destination Magazine* as "America's Best New Attraction." It moves with the times, too; gift certificates may be purchased on-line at www.broadwayatthebeach.com.

Our Suggestion: Guys, go surfing before you hit the beach. Order a Broadway at the Beach gift certificate and present it to your significant other so he or she can enjoy some guilt-free shopping.

At the other end of Myrtle Beach, in North Myrtle Beach actually, and just off Highway 17 to the west, you find the similar, but different, **Barefoot Landing**, www.bflanding.com. Opened in 1988, and winner of many prestigious awards itself, this complex is creatively constructed around a 27-acre freshwater lake teeming with wild life. Over 100 specialty shops, 14 factory direct stores and 15 or so restaurants line the boardwalks that circle the lake. It is home also to the famous Alabama Theater, the House of Blues, the curious Alligator Adventure and the *Barefoot Princess*, which will take you cruising on the adjoining Intracoastal.

If you want to put some snap into your romantic weekend, at least metaphorically speaking, stop by the **Alligator Adventure** at Barefoot Landing, ☎ 843-361-0789, 800-631-0789 or fax 361-0742. This 15-acre park, a reptile zoo, houses one of the largest collections in the world. Besides the over 800 American alligators, including some extremely rare albino American ones, you will find the Komodo dragon, the world's largest land-dwelling lizard, and an amazing array of reptiles, lizards, turtles and giant snakes. King cobras that can grow to over 13 feet long, frogs, other amphibian life and exotic birds are also here. Finally, although it may seem incongruous, there are two giraffes that, because they migrate from the park seasonally, are called "Spring" and "Autumn." All of these fascinating creatures may be viewed from a boardwalk that meanders through ponds landscaped with native and exotic plant life. There are interactive exhibits as well. Which one of you will be brave enough to hug a giant python? Rounding out the activities are venomous snake demonstrations and live gator feedings. Alligator Adventure is open daily, but hours vary by season.

As might be expected, there is no shortage of companies offering cruises and fishing adventures in the Myrtle Beach area. If

this piques your interest, let us introduce you to the **Hurricane Fleet**, ☎ 843-249-5371 in South Carolina and 910-579-3660 in North Carolina, or fax 249-2416. The fleet (really a fleet and not just one vessel) sails, under the control of a professional crew, from the Hurricane Fleet Marina in Calabash, NC. On offer are several great fishing opportunities, with a Half-Day Fishing Trip, at $26 per adult, and sailing, at 8 am or 1 pm, being the most popular. For the more serious fishermen or fisherwomen among you, Gulf Stream Fishing, at $60 per person departs at 7 am for 11 hours of fishing 40 to 50 miles offshore; and Overnight Gulf Stream trips, at $125 per person, will long be remembered. Prices include fishing license, rod, reel, bait and tackle. There are also a number of charter and specialty trips, designed for groups of seven-10 people and with prices varying between $475 and $1,200. A more genteel adventure and one that is a little easier on the wallet is the daily Adventure Cruise, which sails at 2 or 4 pm and costs just $15 per person. All the vessels are thoughtfully designed to accommodate the physically challenged and wheelchair clients.

When the sun goes down you can be certain that the stars will come out, whatever the weather. Myrtle Beach boasts 11 beautiful theaters, with a seating capacity of 22,000 and, no matter your tastes, they will be fulfilled here.

The man held to be responsible for conceptualizing this galaxy of entertainment is Calvin Gilmore, who, in 1986, opened his show, The Carolina Opry, ☎ 843-913-1400, in the stunning 2,200-seat theater at the junction of US 17 Business and US 17 Bypass. Now in its 14th season, and still going strong, it serves up a combination of country, bluegrass, Western swing, big band and gospel music, with patriotic and show tunes and comedy completing the mix. And, to this day, Calvin Gilmore himself often appears to sing and play the guitar.

Next door, and in a 35,000 square-foot-arena, is an entirely different kind of show. **The Dixie Stampede – Dinner & Show**, ☎ 843-497-9700, 800-433-4401 or fax 497-6767, 8901-B Highway 17 Business, owned by Dolly Parton, treats guests to two shows for the price of one. The Dixie Belle Saloon (non-alcoholic) features a pre-show that is a mix of Dixieland music

and comedy. The main show, staged by more than 30 cast members and 32 horses with spectacular star-spangled variety and a dazzlingly patriotic finale, presents a new look at the "Old South." Following the show and a four-course meal, patrons participate, by way of friendly contests, in a North/South rivalry. Believe it or not, there are even ostrich races. Admission, including the meal and soft drinks, is an affordable $29.99 per person.

In a similarly equine theme, but with 25 rare Andalucian stallions and depicting an entirely different era, is the **Medieval Times Dinner & Tournament**, ☎ 843-236-8080, 236-4635, 800-436-4386, www.medievaltimes.com, 2904 Fantasy Way, located in the Fantasy Harbor behind Waccamaw Pottery. Once inside The Castle, a 1,300-seat Grand Ceremonial Arena, you will be transported back through a millennium to feast on a four-course banquet and witness a royal tournament where, for your entertainment and delight, careful attention has been given to the faithful recreation of each chivalrous detail. And, fittingly – but not for you we hope – there is a **Museum of Torture,** which exhibits a collection of diabolical instruments. The show, inclusive of the feast, costs $32.75 plus tax per person.

Many of you will want to check out, preferably before you finalize your trip, who is playing at the magnificent **Palace Theater at Myrtle Beach**, ☎ 843-448-9224, 800-905-4228 or fax 626-9659, 1410 Celebrity Circle, at Broadway at the Beach. This relative newcomer to the Myrtle Beach scene (October, 1995) is easily distinguished, and visible from near and far, by its large cupola dome. Described, in a word, as magnificent, the interior is graced by a luxurious foyer with winding stairs, massive marble columns, gold laced ceilings and a 30-foot by 75-foot burgundy velvet, 5,000-lb. Austrian curtain over the stage. More notably, the 2,700-seat theater is graced regularly by a glittering array of the biggest names and brightest stars in the entertainment world. In 1999 these included Manhattan Transfer, Wayne Newton, Willie Nelson, Julie Andrews, Kenny Rogers and the Bolshoi Ballet. If you are in Myrtle Beach during November and December, look for the Christmas Spectacu-

lar, starring the world famous Rockettes of Radio City Music Hall fame.

Last, but certainly not least, give serious consideration to a night at the 2,000-seat **Alabama Theater**, ☎ 843-845-1646, 800-557-8223, fax 845-5650, www.wildcountry.com, 4750 Highway 17 South, North Myrtle Beach, at Barefoot Landing. Celebrating its eighth season in 2000, this, Carolina's number one attended theater, is owned by country music's number one band, Alabama. This amazing group, named "Artist of the Decade for the 1980s" by American Country Music Awards, has to its credit 42 number one singles and worldwide record sales totaling over 59 million. Alabama performs here several times throughout the year and, when they are otherwise engaged, their theater hosts performances by some of the most famous country and western names in the business. During the holiday season, the Christmas in Dixie show really should not be missed.

Sweet Dreams

The **Yachtsman Resort**, ☎ 843-448-1441, 800-868-8886, fax 626-6261, www.yachtsmanhotel.com, just four blocks from the Pavilion Amusement Park at 1400 North Ocean Boulevard, is an ultra-modern 24-story structure wrapped in mirrored glass. It has 142 luxuriously decorated suites, each with two TVs; kitchenette with refrigerator/ice maker, range, microwave, coffeemaker, dishwasher and dining ware; a very romantic garden-sized whirlpool bath; and a private balcony. We can attest, too, that the views from the top suites, stretching up and down mile upon mile of the Grand Strand, are simply incredible. Rates depend upon the season, type of room and the view from the room. In 1999, these ranged from $59 to $190 a night, with surcharges of up to $50 a night during most holidays.

Our Suggestion: Book the Essence of Romance package, which offers three nights accommodations in a luxury suite, a ro-

mantic dinner for two at one of Myrtle Beach's finest restaurants, a one-hour limousine ride, a gift of two embroidered Yachtsman towels, a rose for the lady upon arrival, chilled champagne waiting in your room and a full breakfast daily for two. Rates for a one-bedroom oceanfront suite range from $385 to $721, depending upon the season.

Other communal amenities include an indoor pool and oceanfront Jacuzzi and an oceanfront deck, which houses two outdoor pools and two heated outdoor Jacuzzis.

The **Atlantica**, ☎ 843-448-8327, 800-248-0003, www.atlantica-resort.ccom, 1702 North Ocean Boulevard, Myrtle Beach, was new to Myrtle Beach in 1999 and is within easy walking distance of the Pavilion Amusement areas downtown. It has one- or two-bedroom condos with deluxe furnishings, two TVs and telephones, full kitchenettes with all expected accessories, and oceanfront balconies. To our minds, the nicest option is a two-bedroom condo on one of the two upper floors, which gives fantastic views and access to the rooftop sundeck. All guests enjoy the use of both indoor and outdoor pools and spas. Rates, again complicated, range from $53 to $265 a night.

The **Wyndham Myrtle Beach Resort and Arcadian Shores Golf Club**, ☎ 843-449-5000, 800-248-9228, fax 497-0168 and www.wyndham.com, 10,000 Beach Club Drive, Myrtle Beach, is found well off the main road in a very nice beachfront location with 600 feet of white sand beach.

The Wyndham also has very special memories for us, and, if you have read the introduction to this chapter carefully, you will have a clue as to why. It was here that we spent our honeymoon in 1975 – only then it was called The Hilton.

In an impressively styled tower and set around a 15-story atrium lobby, you will find 385 luxurious guest rooms, each with a private balcony and ocean view, cable TV, telephone with voice mail and data port, refrigerator, radio alarm clock, in-room safe and shower massager. Rates vary according to four seasons with an oceanfront king-bedded room renting for $49 to $179, a one-bedroom suite for $119 to $289, and a two-bedroom suite from $219 to $389. The Wyndham is the only full-service resort hotel in Myrtle Beach with a golf course on the property, and it has four lighted tennis courts, volleyball courts, a heated indoor pool and an exercise room. On-site oceanfront dining is offered at Arcadian Steaks and Grill and at Beachcomber's, which features live entertainment but is open in summer only for lunch. There is also a pool deck bar by the outdoor heated pool.

You will want to remain touchable on your romantic weekend and the sun at Myrtle Beach – take it from us – can be deceptively brutal. Be sure, then, to pack your sunscreen; and a visor or hat isn't a bad idea either.

The **Sea Watch Resort**, ☎ 843-918-000, 800-879-5908, fax 918-8599, has two towers on the beach, just north of the Wyndham at 161 Sea Watch Drive. You can e-mail them at info@seawatchresort.com, or check their website at www.seawatchresort.com. The hotel offers modern and fully equipped studio, one-bedroom, two-bedroom and three-

bedroom condominiums with an array of layouts and views from which to choose. The studio condo has an efficiency kitchen; all others have a full kitchen. Two- and three-bedroom variations also feature washer and dryer – a nice extra when staying at the beach. Rates vary widely, from $39 to $190, according to the room chosen and the season. For some of the accommodations there is a weekly minimum stay between June 5th and August 13th, but a 10% discount is given for five- to six-day stays arriving on a Sunday. On the other hand, expect to pay a surcharge of $10 to $20 per day on some holiday weekends. As with most beach accommodations, it is best to call for a firm rate before booking. You will also find an array of amenities at the resort. Beautifully landscaped outdoor pools and whirlpools, as well as the relaxing lazy river, are a perfect setting for water fun or for soaking up some rays. Indoor pools and hot tubs provide swimmers an alternative on rainy days or in cooler weather. Also look for a fitness center, sauna, video arcade, guest laundry facilities and an oceanfront restaurant and lounge serving fresh seafood and other delicacies.

Shore Crest Vacation Villas, ☎ 843-361-3600, 800-361-8141, fax 361-3601, www.shorecrest.com, 4709 South Ocean Boulevard, North Myrtle Beach, literally towers over the beach in this less crowded section of the Grand Strand. There is a choice between one-bedroom or two-bedroom ocean view or two-bedroom oceanfront accommodations, all of which have a fully equipped kitchen with the expected modern appliances, a large-screen TV and VCR, stereo with compact disc player and SEGA video games. We always prefer to stay on the oceanfront, although it means paying a little more; here a two-bedroom oceanfront costs, depending on the season, between $99 and $255 a night. Other facilities include an atrium-covered indoor pool; hot tub and exercise room; video game room; pool garden; outdoor pool, whirlpool and lazy river; and bike rentals coordinated through the front desk.

Serendipity an Inn, ☎ 843-449-5268 or 800-762-3229, 407-71st Avenue North, Myrtle Beach, is an elegant Spanish mission-style complex set within private gardens of palmetto trees and bright flowers. And, while just 300 yards walk from the beach, family-owned and -operated Serendipity is far enough off the beaten path to offer quiet nights and peaceful days. Each of its uniquely themed rooms – classified as queen, large queen, master double, mini-suite or king – have been decorated to reflect a different time period, while incorporating such modern amenities as air conditioning, television and a private bath. Rates vary between $45 and $129, by season (of which there are four) and type of room, and include a Continental breakfast served in the Garden Room. Look for an outdoor heated pool and hot tub, shuffleboard, ping-pong table and an outdoor gas grill (just in case you have a lucky day at fishing) with a private seating area and peacefully bubbling fountain.

Tables for Two

Downtown Myrtle Beach

As Indian restaurants are not yet that popular in most parts of the United States, it was a pleasant surprise for us to come across the **Taj Mahal**, ☎ 843-916 4-TAJ (916-4825) or fax 445-2900, at 702 North Kings Highway, on the corner of 7th Avenue North and Kings Highway and near The Pavilion. Both vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes are freshly cooked on the premises and served to your taste – spicy, mildly spicy or without spice. Appetizers include Vegetable Samosa, a turnover stuffed with peas and tomatoes ($2); Chicken Tikka, all white meat marinated in special sauce and cooked in tandoori ($5.25); and Tandoori Mix, chicken tikka, boti and shish kebab, fish pakora and shrimp ($6). There are all manner of Indian breads ($1.50 to $3) and numerous vegetarian dinner specials,

including Dal Makhani, black beans cooked with onions, ginger and tomatoes ($7.95); and Thali, which consists of aloo channa masala, aloo gobi masala or baingan bharta, dal makhani, raita (yogurt with cucumber), choice of bread, Indian basmati rice, choice of soup and a slice of papad ($9.50). Non-vegetarian dishes include chicken specialties ($8.25 to $9.95), lamb specialties ($8.75 to $9.50), seafood ($9.25 to $12.95) and Tandoori meals ($7.95 to $13.95). Taj Mahal is open daily for lunch from 11:30 am to 3 pm and for dinner from 5 to 10:30 pm.

Myrtle Beach

The **Roma Italian Restaurant**, ☎ 843-449-9359, 5815 North Kings Highway, Myrtle Beach, has a colorful history. Since being built in 1935 it has been a bordello, speakeasy, and bed & breakfast before, in 1956, being purchased by the Diminich family for use as a restaurant. Notwithstanding the many changes that have surrounded it in the preceding quarter-century, this interesting, two-story wooden building was instantly recognizable to us as the place where we ate on the first night of our honeymoon in 1975. Then, being a Sunday, it was illegal to serve alcohol, but that has changed these days. Needless to say, the menu is largely Italian-based, with appetizers in the $2.95 to $7.95 range, including Escargot in Mushroom Caps, Fettuccini Alfredo and Linguini with Clams. Veal dishes come in several different varieties, piccata, marsala, guisseppe, cacciatore, saltimbocca, parmigiana and scallopine ($16.95 to $18.95), and chicken dishes are similarly presented ($13.95 to $15.95). As you would expect, house specialties include pasta, spaghetti, lasagne, manicotti, eggplant parmigiana and Italian sausage with green peppers ($10.95 to $12.95). And, of course, there are seafood dishes. All entrées are served with pasta, your choice of soup or salad and fresh baked garlic bread.

Fondue restaurants are gaining in popularity as a new generation discovers the delectation of this traditional Swiss meal.

The **Melting Pot**, ☎ 843-692-9003 or fax 692-9004, 5001 North Highway 17 Business, in the Rainbow Harbor Shopping Complex, is an excellent example of this franchised restaurant. Choose a Traditional Kirschwasser, Swiss, Cheddar or Fiesta Cheese fondue ($9.95 or $10.95), blended tableside and served with French rye and pumpernickel breads, apple wedges, assorted fresh vegetables and your choice of a mushroom or chef's salad. Or, perhaps, an entrée of chicken, steak or seafood fondue – cooked in either a Fondue Court Bouillon or a more traditional cholesterol-free canola oil – is more to your taste ($12.95 to $15.95). Either way, you will show more restraint than allowed on a romantic weekend if you are able to resist a Chocolate Fondue dessert.

Little River

The **Parson's Table**, ☎ 843-249-3702 in SC or 910-579-8298, Highway 17 Little River, has gained for itself an enviable reputation – winning the 1998-99 International Award of Excellence, the Mobil Three-Star rating and a ranking as the "Number One Historic Restaurant in South Carolina," among others. The name refers to the fact that the main dining room was fashioned from the original Little River Methodist Church, which was built in 1885. When the congregation moved to a new location, this structure was converted into a community meeting place. Upon its purchase in 1978 by Toby Frye it was moved approximately two blocks south to its present location and converted to a restaurant, the décor of which included stained and beveled glass collected by Mr. Frye over the years. The present owners are Ed and Nancy Murray. Ed, a member of the world's oldest gastronomical society, the Chaine des Rotisseurs, has over 30 years experience in the restaurant business – a tradition that is being carried on in the family by Ed Jr., the Executive Chef, who was rated "One of the Best Chefs in America" in 1994 by the American Academy of Restaurant & Hospitality Sciences. Appetizers include Mushrooms Copenhagen ($6.95); Sautéed Crabcake with Dill Mustard Sauce ($6.95); and Baked Escargot with Mushrooms and Mozzarella ($7.95). Entrées are divided into four catego-

ries: The "Parson's Beef," "Fresh Seafood," "Pastas & Vegetables" and "Chef's Specialties." Only the choicest USDA Western grain-fed beef, which has been aged a minimum of three to four weeks for tenderness and flavor, is used. The cleverly named Chapel Cut (8 oz.), Cathedral Cut (12 oz.) and Parson's Cut (24 oz.) feature a slice of roast prime rib of beef, served au jus with potato du jour, costing, respectively, $14.50, $16.50 and $21.95. The Filet Mignon with Crabmeat, a center cut tenderloin of beef wrapped in bacon and topped with fresh lump crabmeat and Béarnaise sauce (6oz. $17.50 or 8oz. $21.50) is also very tasty. Of the seafood dishes we were attracted to: Coulibiac of Salmon, fresh salmon filet topped with julienne vegetables, fresh dill and wrapped in puff pastry and served with a champagne shrimp sauce and rice pilaf ($16.95); and Scallops and Shiitake Mushrooms, sautéed sea scallops with mushrooms, pine nuts in a creamy Madeira wine sauce ($16.95). Looking quite tasty in the "Pastas & Vegetables" category were: Sautéed Chicken and Shrimp, sautéed fresh chicken tenderloins and shrimp stir fried with fresh vegetables and a touch of light soy sauce ($15.95); and Veal and Shrimp Bombay, sautéed veal and shrimp simmered in celery, tomato, onion, mango, apricot, apple, coconut milk, curry and natural stock, garnished with toasted coconut, almonds, raisins and scallions ($17.50). Specials included Roast Duckling, semi-boneless half-duckling topped with a raspberry demi-glace ($16.50); and Weiner Schnitzel, sautéed breaded veal cutlet topped with lemon ($16.50). All entrées are prefaced by cheese and crackers and a seasonal salad with homemade house dressing and accompanied by broiled tomato, your choice of rice pilaf or potato de jour, and hot bread. Helpfully, there is a suggested wine for each entrée, and the wine list is a tasty mixture of domestic and international red, white, champagne and sparkling wines.

Toby's Lakeside Restaurant & Lounge, ☎ 843-249-2624, Highway 17 Little River, 2½ miles north of the Intercoastal Bridge and Highway 17, offers fine dining in a casually relaxed ambiance with live entertainment and dancing. Overlooking Turtle Lake, you can savor appetizers including Escargot, French helix snails sautéed in heavy garlic, mushrooms, green

onions and white wine over angel hair pasta ($6.95); and Portabello Copenhagen, a portabello mushroom cap filled with Bordelaise sauce and provolone cheese and then baked ($5.95). Toby's "Specialties and Pastas" include Shrimp and Scallop Champignon, jumbo shrimp and deep sea scallops sautéed with heavy garlic, mushrooms, green onions and white wine and served over angel hair pasta ($17.95); and Roast Duckling du Jour, one-half of a crispy roast duckling served with the sauce of the day and mashed potatoes ($16.95). If beef and veal are to your taste, then you will be interested in Russian Roast, seasoned NY strip sliced to your specifications and served au jus with buttermilk mashed potatoes ($12.95 to $18.95, depending upon size); and Lowcountry Veal Saltimbocca, sautéed veal topped with country ham, sautéed spinach, smoked provolone cheese and a lemon-wine sage butter sauce and served with rice pilaf ($17.95). During Happy Hour in the bar, between 4 and 8 pm, you may order from a special bar menu and eat your fill of free chicken wings. There is music for dancing six nights a week.

On the lighter side of dining, we offer the following suggestions.

Breweries are fun places to eat and drink, and at either end of Myrtle Beach you will find two that both, quite different in ambiance, offer great beers and menus that are typical of their genre. The **Liberty Steakhouse Brewery**, ☎ 843-626-HOPS, is found at 1321 Celebrity Circle within Broadway at the Beach. At Barefoot Landing, the other shopping and entertainment center at North Myrtle Beach, you will find the **Mad Boar Restaurant & Brewery**, ☎ 843-272-7000, www.madboar.com, at 4706 Highway 17 South.

Theme restaurants, too, although they aren't to everyone's tastes, are very popular here at the beach. Most everybody will have heard of the **Hard Rock Café**, ☎ 843-946-0007, and **Planet Hollywood**, ☎ 843-448-STAR (7827), and they are each found, in futuristically styled buildings, at the Broadway at the Beach complex. Here, you will also find the **Official All Star Café**, ☎ 843-916-8326, where the game time is from 11 am to 2 am, daily; and the **NASCAR Café**, ☎ 843-946-RACE,

which will be lapped up by the ever increasing number of lovers of that sport.

Calabash Style

One would have to ride through Myrtle Beach with blinders to miss the proliferation of signs advertising a "Calabash Style all you can eat seafood buffet." These places are, for the most part, family-oriented and not very romantic. Nevertheless they deserve some explanation. Calabash itself, rather grandly self-styled as "The Seafood Capital of the World," is a very small town at the southernmost point in North Carolina and just a few minutes from North Myrtle Beach. Located on the river, its docks are home to numerous fishing boats who bring ashore bountiful supplies of fish, shrimp and crabs. The numerous local restaurants then serve the catch "Calabash Style" – copious amounts of it, lightly breaded and fried, along with French fries, coleslaw and hush puppies. More than one restaurant makes claim to being "The Original," but it is anyone's guess as to which one really is. That said, if you want to experience this local phenomenon, one establishment is pretty much the same as another.

Surprisingly, there aren't too many beachside bars or cafés, but one you won't want to miss is the suitably named **Bummz Beach Café**, ☎ 843-916-9111, at 2002 North Ocean Boulevard. Here, you will find a lively, engaging, and casual atmosphere, with typical bar food and drinks served either inside or on the vast beachfront deck.

Shops, Spas, etc.

Whether you are in the market for a traditional dozen roses or something fanciful, the helpful staff at **Silks etc.**, 4803 Highway 17 By Pass, ☎ 843-293-3100, will be most happy to help you out with your floral needs.

Our Suggestion: Guys or gals, why not go tropical, in keeping with the locale? Ask the floral designer to whip up something sunny, unique and fun to set the mood for sun-kissed romance.

While Myrtle Beach is a fun place with its own brand of charms, we were surprised to find a day spa as good as **The Spa at Jordan Marsh Salon**, ☎ 843-448-6750, 411 Broadway (not to be confused with Broadway at the Beach), in downtown Myrtle Beach. Susan Taylor, esthetician and owner, has put together an interesting menu of treatments that will appeal to those wishing to be indulged for an hour or two, or maybe more. Therapeutic massages cost $35 for a half-hour or $55 for a full hour, and an aromatherapy massage is available for $60. facials are in the $40 to $60 range; and body masks, either with seaweed or hydrating, cost $80 and $75, respectively. We would suggest, though, that you treat yourself, or yourselves, to a Spa Excursion, which begins with a stimulating shower, followed by an hour-long massage, manicure, and pedicure, and finishes with a facial – all for just $140.

Those of you looking for a piece of fine, or even erotic, lingerie to spice up your romantic weekend will find two or three options. We recommend that you take the short trip down to **Day-Dreams Intimate Apparel**, ☎ 843-238-3565 or 800-593-7252, at 3804 South Kings Highway, in the Center South Shopping Center. Here you will find a nice selection of lingerie, both fancy and fun; an aromatic array of oils, massage oils, candles and bath salts, all by the KamaSutra Company; and a range of toys and games. If you don't immediately see what you are looking for in the latter category, don't be embarrassed to

open the drawers of the cabinets around the store; these contain the more adventurous of the adult toys!

Wandering through Broadway at the Beach and Barefoot Landing you will surely be beguiled by the attractive goods on display in the numerous specialty stores. And, we suspect that you will be particularly attracted by to **Hammock Hut**, ☎ 843-448-3668, 1209 Celebrity Circle, J-140A at Broadway at the Beach and ☎ 843-272-1480, 4710-C Highway 17 South at Barefoot Landing, or 800-334-7111. If you have a hammock or two in your backyard, as we do, you will surely concur when we espouse the benefits of these wonderful creations. If you are not yet a hammock owner, we encourage you to consider becoming one. Any number of hammocks are on display at Hammock Hut: regular single and double rope hammocks, chair hammocks, and fine cloth hammocks adorned with crochet or macramé fringes that create a decorative look suitable for indoor use. For an advance peek at what you can expect, check out their website at http://www.hammockhut.com, where, if you don't plan a trip to Myrtle Beach anytime soon, you can simply order on online.

If you have enjoyed feasting on fresh seafood during your stay, why not take some back home? When heading south, or leaving town by way of downtown, stop by **Strand Seafood**, ☎ 843-448-6511, 803 Highway 17 South. Ed Richardson, the owner, has been in business for 18 years – the longest in town. In addition to a huge selection of fresh fish and other seafood, which he will pack to go, you will find a variety of spices and beers. If you are based in North Myrtle Beach and will be heading north, make a beeline for **Berry's Food Inc.**, ☎ 843-249-2534, just off Highway 17 on 1122 Sea Mountain Highway, at Little River. Catering to the wholesale and retail markets, this rather large store has, besides the expected fish and seafood packed for travel at no extra charge, a really interesting section of condiments and outdoor cooking gadgets – including many unusual items that would make a great addition to your barbecue and steamer supplies.

Pumpkin Island

This section is presented in a different format from all others and it is unusually short. The reason is that Pumpkin Island is truly unique and it is the smallest place in this guide – just one home upon one acre. Are you intrigued? That was our reaction when we came across a small ad in the *Boating News* that was captioned "Your Own Private Island – Charleston, SC." Having always had a Robinson Crusoe fantasy, we decided to investigate. What we found was fascinating!

There are numerous barrier islands up and down this section of the coast, many of which you will be familiar with and some of which are highlighted in this guide. But we'd be surprised if you have heard of Pumpkin Island – even though it's only 10 miles from Charleston. There is no ferry service; there is no hotel, B&B, or restaurant; and there are no stores. In fact, you will be the only people there; and that, for those romantically minded, is the main attraction. Beachcomb or sun in total privacy (maybe European-style), explore miles of creeks and rivers, sail, swim, fish, go crabbing, gather oysters and clams, marvel at the antics of the many birds, keep a vigil for dolphins, or relax in the hammock – the choice is yours. There will be no one to distract you or to rush you.

The accommodations, too, are delightful. In 1997, Hattie and Tom Bessent constructed on their lushly wooded island a small rustic cottage. And, we couldn't imagine a more idyllic island hideaway. On the main floor, there are two bedrooms with a double bed in each, a kitchen and living area. Above is a sleeping loft with bunk beds and another double bed. There is also a large porch and a deck for private frolics. Linens and towels are provided and, if you ask Hattie and Tom in advance, they will stock (at your expense) all of the food, drinks and other goodies you will need. The house systems work much like those on a cruise boat. When you first arrive, Tom and Hattie will accompany you to the island to acquaint you briefly with the area waters and to explain how the battery bank, recharged by a generator every two or three days, supplies electrical power for

lights, appliances and water pressure. This does mean that there is no air conditioning, but there are fans and the house is constructed to take full advantage of the prevailing summer sea breezes. Gas heat will keep you cozy if you visit in winter.

Should you – and we can't imagine why – decide to venture out, the island village of Folly Beach is less than 15 minutes away by boat. There you will find a beachfront park, ocean fishing pier, marinas, shops and waterside restaurants. Alternatively, the city of Charleston is near enough for a comfortable day or evening trip.

Obviously, the only way to Pumpkin Island is by boat. If you haven't one of your own, though, don't fret. Hattie and Tom can make arrangements for you to rent one. Docking isn't a problem, either. The island has a 25-foot floating dock accessible to smaller craft, and larger vessels can anchor in the deep, wide creek and take a dinghy in from there.

For more information, or to make a reservation by the day ($120 to $150 per night) or by the week ($800 to $1,000), write Tom and Hattie Bessent, 684 Clearview Drive, Charleston, SC 29412 or ☎ 843-795-6509. Then, plan to live out your very own Robinson Crusoe fantasy.

Seabrook Island

Seabrook Island, found approximately 22 miles south of Charleston, is another of South Carolina's barrier islands. As with many of its kind, Seabrook was populated, originally, by Native Americans. During the Colonial period, English settlers, taking full advantage of the fertile environment, cultivated rice and indigo on what they called Jones Island. In 1753, the island was purchased by Ebenezer Simmons who, not so modestly, named it after himself. Several changes of proprietorship later in 1816, William Seabrook took ownership, and, thus, the name as it is recorded today.

Today, Seabrook Island is privately held and operated. The owners personally guide the destiny of the island and place great emphasis on the protection and conservation of its natu-

ral resources and beauty. Access is controlled at the security gate, ensuring privacy for owners and guests alike, as they enjoy the 2,200 acres of grounds, bordered by 3½ miles of pristine beaches and the Edisto River. The scene is one of incredible natural beauty, teeming with wildlife and waterfowl. In addition, there are two championship golf courses, a tennis center, a fitness center, swimming pools, a 22-acre Equestrian Center, many restaurants, and a smattering of shops – all of which are for the exclusive use of owners and guests. And, just outside the security gates, Bohicket Marina has a full array of boating and fishing adventures on offer, and boasts a variety of restaurants and specialty stores.

In sum, it may not be as well known as its near neighbor, Kiawah Island, but that may be all the better for those in search of a less commercial atmosphere.

Things to Do

No loving couple coming to Seabrook Island will be able to resist sunrise, sun-kissed, and moonlight strolls along the wonderfully unspoiled beaches. You will truly feel as if time is standing still as you walk hand-in-hand in the surf, making tender memories that will last a lifetime.

For a bit of easygoing fun, head over to the Recreation Pavilion, open between 7 am and 8 pm in the summer, and closing an hour earlier during other seasons. For the young and the restless who want to expend some energy, bikes or inline skate rentals are available at $6 per hour, $11 for a half-day, or $16 for a full day. More serious exercise can be found at the fully equipped Fitness Center, open from 6:30 am to 7 pm, with extended evening hours in the summer, at a daily fee of $15 per person. For those seeking more sedate pursuits, crabbing equipment is available for $6 a day and fishing rods are rented out at $6 per hour, $11 for a half-day, or $20 for a full day, with the bait for both included in the fees. Finally, if watching the waves and each other is all the daytime exercise you have in

mind, sand chairs are for rent at $3 per hour, $6 for a half-day, or $11 for a full day.

If you find yourselves overheated, for whatever reason, you can cool off at the Beach Club Pool Complex. Open in the summer between 7 am and 10 pm, this features a junior Olympic-size lap pool, a family-size pool – heated from mid-March to December, and a wading pool. In addition, you will find numerous other pools in and around the accommodation areas.

Back on the subject of **golf**, Seabrook Island's two championship golf courses offer quite contrasting styles of play. Ocean Winds, at 6,761-yards and designed by Willard Byrd, presents formidable challenges, especially on the incoming nine holes. Crooked Oaks, created by Robert Trent Jones, Sr., is a more classically styled 6,746-yard course, winding through forests of huge, centuries old, oaks and pines. And, on either course, birdies are easily come by; just recently, the two courses were named South Carolina's first "Fully Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary." Golf rates, for 18 holes per person per day and including green fees and cart, vary over the five designated seasons from $55 to $110. Lessons and a full range of golf services are also available.

Tennis lovers will find much to please them at Seabrook Island Resort. The Racquet Club, open between 8 am and dusk year-round, offers unlimited play, for just $12 per person per day, on 13 composition – Har-tru clay courts. Lessons, private or in clinic, can be arranged, and racquets, balls and a ball machine can be rented at very reasonable rates. Be forewarned, though, that very conservative dress codes are in effect for both tennis and golf.

Unique to the resort at Seabrook Island, is the Equestrian Center, home of the annual Charleston Summer Classic Horse Show. All riders, from experienced to wannabes, are accommodated. Beginner trail rides meander through the scenic woods, marshes and tidal creeks for $45 per person, while an advanced trail ride is $55. More romantic and costing $65 is an exhilarating beach ride that tours the North Beach area. It is, however, limited to riders who have good control at walk, trot or canter.

If you aren't quite at that level yet, private lessons, at $30 for a half-hour or $50 for an hour, may be in order.

Surely by now you will be of a mind to try out your sea (or river) legs. If so, the **Bohicket Boat Adventure & Tour Co.**, ☎ 843-768-7294 and fax 768-4962, at the Bohicket Marina, presents as wide an array of marine adventures as you are likely to find. If you want to master your own craft for the day, for a half-day, or for just an hour, then you should consider a boat rental. Some options, all radio equipped, include a 15-foot 60hp Boston Whaler, a 23-foot 200hp Deckboat, a 16-foot 25hp Skiff, or a 22-foot 9hp Catalina sailboat. Half-day rates begin at $100 and full-day rates go up to $390, with fuel costs not included. If you don't happen to have your crabbing gear or rod and reel at hand, these can be rented with the boats at $4 or $5, respectively. Perhaps, though, you are not quite ready to go it alone. You may prefer a custom tour on a 25-foot boat with a captain at $190 for two hours or $275 for three hours. The popular two-hour river cruise explores the creeks, rivers and marshes for dolphins and other abundant wildlife. Or, how about a tour in a two-person kayak?

If fishing is your sport, **Bohicket Boat Adventure & Tour** will arrange for Flats Fishing, where you might land redfish, trout or other local species. This trip lasts four hours and costs $250 for two people. A half-day or full-day In-Shore Trip angling for mackerel, blackfin, tuna, cobia and shark is another interesting option. According to the size of the boat, prices range from $340 to $1,000. Finally, if you really are serious about landing a big one, then you need to get right out into the Gulf Stream, home of the giant marlin, sailfish, tuna, dolphin and wahoo. The sheer distance necessitates that you plan for a full-day trip; and you will have to dig a little deeper in the pockets as well. Gulf Stream trips are priced between $600 and $1,350, depending on boat size. Vessels for either of these expeditions range from 25 feet to 55 feet, though each has a six-person capacity. The rates will seem a bit more manageable when you realize that everything is included except your own food and drink.

On a more traditionally romantic note, picture this. Gentle breezes are rustling the sails of a sleek yacht piloted by an unobtrusive captain. The peaceful sky is emblazoned by the fiery hues of a setting sun. The champagne is chilling and you and your lover are on the foredeck... well, you had better write your own ending. To set this scene, call **Bohicket Yacht Charters**, ☎ 843-768-2647 or digital pager 571-8080, at 1880 Andell Bluff Road, Bohicket Marina Village, set a date with Captain Jack McConnell, and prepare for an unforgettable experience aboard his 33-foot center-cockpit, aft-cabin sloop. The rate is $290 for a three-hour sail, but give serious consideration to extending the adventure to five hours at $450. And, if you want to try your hand at the helm, Captain Jack will let you sail the boat as much as you like.

Our Suggestion: Really splurge and book a full eight-hour day at $575. This allows you to combine the best of both maritime worlds; a frolic during the day on a secluded barrier island – the captain carries an inflatable dinghy to take you places the yacht it self can't reach – and a romantic evening on board later.

Sweet Dreams

Seabrook Island The Resort, ☎ 843-768-1000, 800-845-2475, fax 768-3096, e-mail resort@charleston.net, www.seabrookresort.com, 1002 Landfall Way, Seabrook Island, SC 29455, offers not just a room, but one- , two- or three-bedroom villas or a private home. Whichever you choose, you will find tasteful furnishings, a fully equipped kitchen, living room and dining room, TV and VCR, washer and dryer, and a supply of linens. Rates, though, are particularly complicated. They are determined by the view – Racquet Club/Scenic Area, Golf Area or the more preferable Ocean Area; the season – of which there are six; and the type of accommodations – one- , two- or three-bedroom villa. By way of example, a One-

Bedroom Villa in the Ocean Area costs between $135 and $250 per night.

The Honeymoon/Getaway Package, which requires a two-night minimum stay, offers good value and gives some romantic extras: a couple's horseback trail ride, unlimited tennis court time, use of bicycles and/or inline skates, a fruit basket and a bottle of bubbly. The cost for a one-bedroom Ocean Villa ranges between $170 and $265 per night per couple, dependoning on season. If you are so inclined, inquire about Equestrian, Golf and Tennis packages, and be aware that prices will be quoted per person.

Tables for Two

It is not necessary to leave Seabrook Island The Resort for dining, fine or casual. The **Island House Restaurant**, ☎ 843-768-2571, with scenic views over the Edisto Sound, is the choice for exquisite gourmet dining. Dinner is served between 6 and 9 pm, reservations are strongly recommended, and slacks and a collared shirt are required for gentlemen, with jackets preferred but not required. For a particularly tasty appetizer try Parmesan-Crusted Oysters, fresh shucked oysters dipped in a parmesan egg batter, deep fried to a golden brown and served with Smoked Salmon Basil cream sauce ($8.25). Our choice of the entrées would be Carolina Crab Cakes, fresh local crab combined with crisp garden vegetables, pan seared and finished with a creamy mustard sauce ($16.50); or Herb-Crusted Grouper Meunière, grouper filet crusted with herbed breadcrumbs and fresh aromatic herbs, complemented with a roasted garlic and lemon parsley butter ($16.25). This restaurant is also open for breakfast from 7 to 10:30 am and for lunch from 11 am to 3 pm.

Less formal dining is on-site at the **Seaview Restaurant** or at **Bohicket's Lounge**, which stocks an excellent selection of domestic and imported beers and a range of vintages as listed on the regular and Captain's wine lists. If you have a mind to eat lounging by the pool or out on the beach, then head to **Cap'n**

Sam's for convenient take-out options. Rounding out the options are **The Half Shell**, a favorite open-air lounge and sports bar, and **The Pelican's Nest**, appropriately found nestling by the pools.

Shops, Spas, etc.

The **Seabrook Shoppe**, which has actually been honored as one of the "Top 100 Gift Shops in the Country," is the place to go for a special memento of your romantic weekend at Seabrook Island The Resort. And if you've not come prepared with a good book or magazines, it has a nice selection of those, along with daily newspapers, snacks and other sundries.

Georgia Coast
1. Fort Pulaski
2. Tybee Island
3. Savannah
4. Skidaway Island State Park
5. Fort McAllister Historical Site
6. Fort Morris Historic Site
7. Fort Stewart Museum
8. Fort King George
9. Sapelo Island Wildlife Refuge
10. Little St. Simons Island
11. St. Simons Island
12. Sea Island
13. Brunswick
14. Jekyll Island
15. Cumberland Island
16. Okefenokee Nat'l Wildlife Refuge
To Macon
SOUTH CAROLINA
Atlantic Ocean
FLORIDA
To Florida
NOT TO SCALE
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Georgia

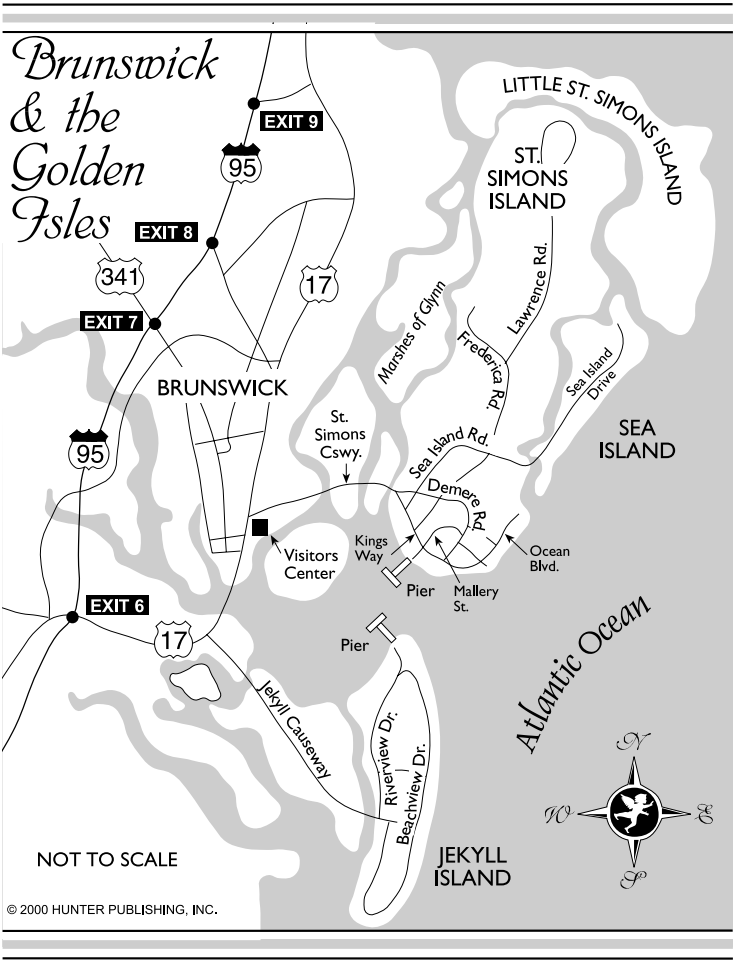
Brunswick & the Golden Isles

Barrier islands are found along nearly the entire Eastern Seaboard of the United States. Perhaps you will find it surprising that these are geologically younger than, and not merely pieces of, the mainland. Some came into existence around 30,000 years ago and others emerged within the last 3,000 years. They are continually reshaped by the powerful forces of nature in the form of winds, ocean currents, waves, storms and tides. But it is the tides that have the greatest impact on their evolution. The eastern coastline of Georgia is the end of a massive ocean funnel and, as a consequence, tides here rise higher (six to eight feet) and faster than anyplace else on the Eastern Seaboard.

There are 12 barrier islands along the Georgia coastline. A cluster of four of them, listed north to south as Little St. Simons Island, St. Simons Island, Sea Island and Jekyll Island, and an interesting mainland town, Brunswick, are known, collectively, as Brunswick and The Golden Isles of Georgia.

It is of great interest to note that the flags of five nations have flown over Brunswick & The Golden Isles. The first, the Spanish flag, was hoisted around 1540 when Hernando de Soto explored the area. This was supplanted, albeit briefly between 1562 and 1564, with the arrival and then departure of French Huguenots; it flew until the Union Jack was raised by British General James Edward Oglethorpe in 1736. From 1776 to 1861 the American flag, with its 13 stars symbolizing the 13 original colonies, flew here. In 1861, Georgia seceded from the Union and, from that date until 1865, the Stars and Bars of the Confederate States of America was raised. At the end of the Civil

War the American flag flew again, this time with 36 stars. Beyond this shared experience, each of the above-named places is endowed with its own history and characteristics.



St. Simons Island

History

This is both the largest and most historical of the islands. In an interesting comparison, it is about the same size as Manhattan, around 24 square miles, but has a population of only 15,000. Its earliest inhabitants were the Native Americans of the Muskogean tribes. In the 16th century Spanish explorers settled here and called it "San Simeon." In 1736, General James Oglethorpe, founder of Savannah, established Georgia's first military outpost at Fort Frederica to protect English colonists from Spanish forces. In fact, six years later, in 1742, the Battle of Bloody Marsh, at the southern tip of the island, actually determined the course of Colonial history. The conflict ensued when Spanish forces landed on the south of the island and forced General Oglethorpe's troops back to Fort Frederica. Not to be outdone, English troops regrouped and, though outnumbered five-to-one, surprised the enemy, chased them back to Fort St. Simons on the coast (which was destroyed by the retreating forces), and won a decisive victory that, forever, ended the Spanish threat to the colonies.

Rock-hard island oaks, indigenous to the island, were put to good use during Revolutionary times. They were milled for use in warships such as the *USS Constitution*, more fondly known as "Old Ironsides." The ensuing century and a quarter, ending with the Civil War, was one of affluence as crops of indigo and Sea Island cotton were raised on antebellum plantations throughout the island. One of these, **Hampton Plantation** on the island's northern tip, was the hiding place of Vice President Aaron Burr in 1804 after he had killed Alexander Hamilton in a duel. Another, **Retreat Plantation**, overlooking St. Simons Sound at the south of the island, is the present site of the Sea Island Golf Club that, itself, is approached via the famous **Avenue of the Oaks**, planted by Anna Page King after she inherited the land in 1826. Finally, **Hamilton Plantation**, now the site of the Epworth by the Sea United Methodist Conference/

Retreat Center, was originally owned by Captain James Gascoigne who brought Oglethorpe's first settlers to Frederica.

St. Simons Island is connected to Brunswick, on the mainland, by a causeway that runs over vast stretches of The Marshes of Glynn. The latter were immortalized by the 19th-century American poet, Sidney Lanier, in his masterful work of the same name.

Sea Island

History

Hugging the eastern contours of its very near neighbor, St. Simons Island, Sea Island is the smallest of the four barrier islands at just 760 acres. Five miles long and previously known by a number of names – Fifth Creek Island, Isle of Palms, Long Island, Glynn n Isle and Sea Island Beach – it owes its fame to wealthy visionary Howard E. Coffin, who pioneered the idea of opening a resort hotel here. He formed the Sea Island Company, then managed by his friend and cousin Alfred William (Bill) Jones Sr. Having no sons of his own, Coffin later ceded ownership to the younger man. To this day the Jones family controls the Sea Island Company, which continues to manage the resort.

An initial obstacle to the resort's development was a lack of public utilities. They solved this by building their own electricity plant and installing a local telephone system. In addition, as there was no railroad service to Brunswick at that time, a transport company was formed to shuttle guests to and from the nearby hubs of Savannah and Jacksonville. It was some time later that Mr. Jones persuaded the Seaboard Air Line Railroad to add a stop at Thalman, just 12 miles north of Brunswick, for the convenience of Cloister guests. The resort itself, a hotel of 46 rooms, was designed by acclaimed architect Addison Mizner, who originated the name Cloister. He created a low, sprawling, Mediterranean-style structure, set back from the ocean, with cloistered terraces and a grand lounge with high beamed ceiling and clerestory windows. A young land-

scape architect, T. Miesse Baumgardner, was commissioned to complement the design, which he did – transforming the island into a subtropical balance of natural and cultivated beauty. Simultaneously, work continued on a residential colony whose street names honor Indians, Frenchmen, Spaniards, Colonists, and even pirates.

In testimony to Howard Coffin's determination to overcome, The Cloister opened on October 12, 1928. Not long after, in 1937 upon Mr. Coffin's death, ownership passed to Alfred W. Jones. Although the first decade of its operation was not an overwhelming success, persistence paid many dividends. Over the ensuing decades, the hotel was expanded to 286 rooms, refurbishments and renovations were undertaken faithful to the original style, and activities – golf, tennis, horseback riding, sailing, boating and shooting – and their supporting facilities were added. In keeping with popular trends, a modern state-of-the-art spa recently joined the Cloister's menu of amenities. The Spa has been given the Jeffrey Joseph Spa of the Year Award annually since 1993 by readers of *Spa Management Magazine*.

Throughout the years, with an ambiance that combines the carefree balance of luxurious living with casual comfort, The Cloister has gained an international reputation as a first-class resort. This, in turn, has attracted a wide array of US presidents, royalty and other dignitaries. It is also a favorite honeymoon destination. Since a register was first kept, in the early 1940s, over 36,000 honeymoon couples have begun their wedded life at The Cloister, and many, President and Mrs. Bush for example, have returned to celebrate their anniversaries.

Little St. Simons Island

At seven square miles and with 10,000 acres, this is the northernmost of the islands and, being accessible only by boat from St. Simons Island, it is certainly the most secluded. During the 1800s, it was a part of the Hampton Rice Plantation, whose owners were prominent citizens in this part of coastal Georgia.

In 1908 it was bought by the Eagle Pencil Company, with the aim of harvesting the red cedar trees for pencil making. When these proved to be unsuitable, Mr. Philip Berolzheimer, the company's owner, purchased the island as a family-owned private retreat, which it still is today. Finally, in 1979, The Lodge on Little St. Simons Island was opened to the public, although the current owners, intent on preserving the natural state of the island, limit the number of guests to just 30 at a time.

Jekyll Island

This, the southernmost of the islands, is 10 miles long by 1½ miles wide. As dictated by a 1995 law, development is limited to no more than 35% of its 4226.68 acres above the mean high waterline – thus preserving a mostly undeveloped, pristine, environment that is rich with wildlife.

History

Jekyll Island's first known inhabitants were the Guale Indians, who called it "Ospo," which means "toward the marsh." Subsequent to Spanish missionaries' habitation of the island in the 16th and 17th centuries, General James Oglethorpe, passing by the island in 1734, renamed it after a friend, Sir Joseph Jekyll, who had contributed generously toward his campaign to colonize Georgia. One of Oglethorpe's most trusted officers, Major William Horton, established a home and a prosperous plantation on the island. These were, unfortunately, destroyed in 1742 by the retreating Spanish, following their defeat at the Battle of Bloody Marsh on St. Simons Island. By 1746 Major Horton had rebuilt both, using in their construction "tabby" – a building material native to coastal Georgia having crushed oyster shells as its main ingredient. The shell of that home and the ruins of Georgia's first brewery, which he also built, can be seen to this day. After the Major's death in 1749, his son had no inclination to operate the plantation him-

self. As subsequent owners fell short in their efforts to develop the property, it was sold several times for the payment of outstanding debts and taxes prior to its acquisition by Christophe Poulain du Bignon around 1800. He raised Sea Island cotton until his death 1825, and it was in 1858, under his son's ownership, that the slave ship *Wanderer* arrived at Jekyll Island with the last major cargo of slaves ever to land in the United States. The Civil War destroyed the plantation way of life here, as it did elsewhere, and, finding it impractical during Reconstruction to continue operation of a cotton plantation, the du Bignon family subdivided the land, selling it off section-by-section.

Postwar entrepreneur John Eugene du Bignon, a descendant of Christophe Poulain, purchased one of these sections. He and his brother-in-law, the well-connected Newton S. Finney, formulated a plan to purchase the island and to sell it to northerners seeking warmer climes during the winter months for their use as a private hunting club. To their advantage, Finney, as a member of New York's Union Club, a meeting place for some of America's wealthiest and most influential men, was in an ideal situation to arrange hunting trips for his affluent friends. By June 16, 1885, the men had succeeded in purchasing the entire island at a cost of $13,100 and were in a position to negotiate with the prospective Jekyll Island Club. A purchase price of $125,000 was agreed upon and, on January 8, 1886, the Jekyll Island Club was officially incorporated with a limit of 100 shares of stock. They expected 50 subscribers, with each taking two shares, but by April 1st demand was so great that the charter list had expanded to 53. Subsequently, the Club management required the purchase of only one share of stock and, requiring election by other members, limited the membership to 100. The formation of the new club was announced in the April 4, 1886 edition of *The New York Time*s, which noted, presciently, that it was going to be "the 'swell' club, the crème de la crème of all, inasmuch as many of the members are intending to erect cottages and make it their Winter Newport."

Over the next half-century this became the winter home for the visionaries, mainly from New York City, who led the technological and economic revolution that transformed the United States from an agrarian society to an industrial world power. Men such as William Rockefeller, J. P. Morgan, Joseph Pulitzer, Vincent Astor and William K. Vanderbilt, household names to this day, spent the season here between January and early April. Indeed, so exclusive was the club that, during its active existence from 1886 until 1942, only 361 men and women were privileged to hold full membership.

Acclaimed landscape artist Horace W. S. Cleveland was retained to lay out the grounds and the building plots for members, with the mission of creating a "paradise" that would enhance the natural beauty of the island. With the completion of architect Charles A. Alexander's elegant yet unpretentious clubhouse by November 1, 1887, the Jekyll Island Club was ready for the 1888 season, its first. It was during that first year that members began construction of their private residences which, rather euphemistically, were referred to as "cottages." To anyone else, they would have been considered mansions. Slowly, club facilities were expanded and improved. Telephone communications were established with the mainland in 1892, a golf course was added in 1898, and electricity replaced the antiquated gas lighting system in 1903. By the end of the First World War in 1918, it boasted oyster beds, a full-scale dairy, a large vegetable garden, a collection of vintage wines, a steam launch for guest excursions, a taxidermist, and even a small church. And the library made available whatever newspapers the members required, regardless of where they were published.

Life at the Jekyll Island Club was tranquil and gracious indeed. The splendid yachts of the Vanderbilts and Astors became familiar sights. The hub of social life was the Club House, where most members enjoyed sumptuous cuisine and one another's company for activities such as whist, bridge, billiards and the occasional dance. Outdoor recreations included hunting, cycling, horseback riding and tennis. All in all, for the

wealthy, Jekyll was a total escape from the hectic daily routine in the north.

Notwithstanding that, however, Jekyll Island would host several events of national importance during the "Club Era." In 1910, Senator Nelson Aldrich arranged a meeting on the island to draft a plan for sweeping banking reforms. So secret was the transaction that the use of full names was forbidden, and participants thus became known as the "First-Name Club". The resulting agreement was the Aldrich Plan that, with some modifications, in 1913 became the Federal Reserve System. Also of import was the first transcontinental telephone call, which, on January 25, 1915, connected Bell Telephone General Manager Theodore N. Vailon on J ekyll Island with Alexander Graham Bell in New York, President Wilson in Washington DC, and Bell's assistant, Thomas Watson, in San Francisco.

The Club's future was not, however, impervious to the ravages of the Great Depression, when all but the very wealthy suffered. Following the entry of United States into World War II in December 1941, the 1942 season was forced to close a few weeks early for lack of supplies. The intention was to open again after the war; but as fate would have it the Club never reopened its doors.

In 1946, Governor Ellis G. Arnall set up a committee to consider one of Georgia's Sea Islands for use as a state park. Having decided upon Jekyll Island, the committee was informed that it was not for sale. The state, though, was eminently empowered to condemn the island and to confiscate it for public use. On October 8, 1947, with the consent of the Club, which received a settlement of $675,000, Georgia took possession of Jekyll Island. It promptly established the Jekyll Island Authority, and assigned as one its first tasks responsibility for building a causeway to the mainland. For some time the state attempted to operate the Club House and apartments but, as there was less concern in those days with historic preservation, little effort was put into maintenance of the buildings and some fell into a sorry state of disrepair. In 1969, after recognizing the historic value of these turn-of-the-century treasures, the Authority instituted the restoration of the McKay-Rockefeller

Cottage, continuing work on other structures into the early 1970s. In recognition of these ongoing efforts, the Secretary of the Treasury designated the 240-acre Jekyll Island Club Historic District as a National Historic Landmark in June 1978.

During the era that spanned the late 1950s through the early 1970s, much development, including hotels, golf courses, a shopping center and convention complex, took place on the island. However, because the developers knew little about the importance of sensitive dune networks and undisturbed natural areas, the construction was done with scant regard for its environmental impact.

In 1978, a new era began when the state amended the structure of the Jekyll Island Authority, replacing political favoritism with a business approach to the island's management. The new board, consisting of private citizens from throughout the state, ended tax revenue support and imposed a mandate that the Authority should become self-supporting through revenues generated on the island. Thus, since 1983, no state taxes have been used to support Jekyll Island's operations. The Authority also established a Museums and Historic Preservation Division to implement a professional approach to preservation and collections management efforts. At the same time, work continued apace in restoring, stabilizing and interpreting the structures and sites within the Historic District, culminating, in 1985, with the newly renovated and restored Jekyll Island Club Hotel. In the mid-1980s the golf facilities were vastly improved, and in 1988 the Jekyll Island Tennis Complex opened, along with Summer Waves, an 11-acre water-park.

Concurrently, the Jekyll Island Authority, mindful of its role as steward of an environmentally sensitive barrier island, worked to reverse the damage caused by earlier development. In the early 1980s, it rebuilt the dune systems and installed crossovers to the beach at the South Dunes Picnic Area. It also oversaw the replacement of six acres of an asphalt parking lot with dune networks and attractive parking and picnic areas. To further protect the island and guarantee its preservation for future generations, the Georgia General Assembly passed leg-

islation in 1995 that limits development on Jekyll Island to no more than 35% of the land above mean high water.

Visitors to Jekyll Island may be surprised that, after crossing the causeway from the mainland, they are assessed $3 fee per day upon entering the island. In reality, this fee is not for admission, but for parking or operating of a vehicle on the island. The revenue received is one source of funding for the island's operations and maintenance.

Brunswick

History

Brunswick, founded as a Colonial outpost and named for Braunsweig, the German ancestral home of King George II, grantor of Georgia's original land charter, is the gateway to the Golden Isles. Laid out in 1771 and based on General James Oglethorpe's famous grid system, its streets and squares were named in honor of the King and House of Hanover and, unusually, were not changed after the American Revolution. The town flourished during the resort era, a century ago, and the fine array of Victorian architecture in The Old Town National Register Historic District reflects this period. Today's urban renewal has spawned many new businesses, including numerous antique stores, in the downtown area.

The city claims to be the official home of Brunswick Stew.

Brunswick is also a busy port. Following the disastrously high number of ships and cargo lost to enemy U-boats during the early years of the Second World War, the US Maritime Commission selected Brunswick, and 15 other sites around the country, to build what would later be known as "Liberty Ships." Incredibly, the J. A. Jones Construction Company, which employed over 16,000 people in the shipyards, produced 99 of these 447-foot ships in less than two years between 1943 and 1945. Nowadays, in addition to welcoming ocean-going freighters from around the world, the city's waterfront district is fa-

mous for its fleet of commercial shrimp boats that supply the area's large seafood industry. During the shrimp season, which runs from early June to the end of February, it is fascinating to wander, from Bay Street between Gloucester and Prince Streets, to the docks, to watch the shrimpers unload their catches in the late afternoon.

One of the most fascinating discoveries we made in researching this chapter, was that each one of these islands, no matter how close they are geographically, has developed for itself an entirely different character from the others. This is reflected in the ambiance of the principal hotels, and the facilities and activities that they, and their island, have to offer. The advantage to romantic weekenders and others is that, no matter your tastes, you are certain to find one of these Golden Isles of Georgia to your liking.

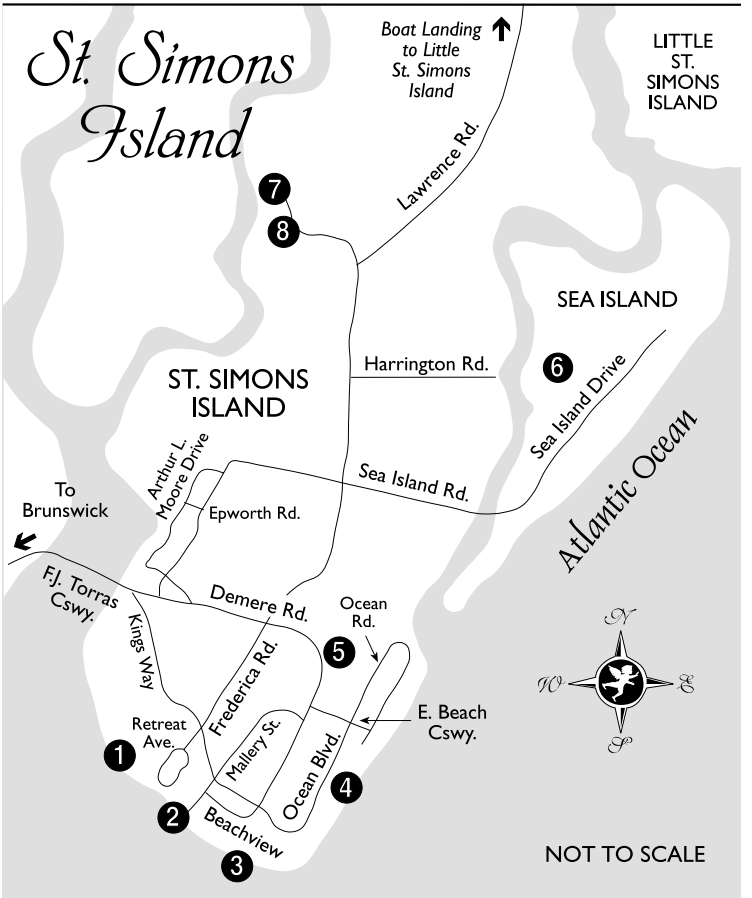
Things to Do

The **Brunswick & The Golden Isles of Georgia Visitors Bureau**, ☎ 912-265-0620, 800-933-COAST (2627), fax 265-0629, www.bgislesvisitorsb.com, is located at 4 Glynn n Avenue, Brunswick, GA 31520. Welcome Centers are located on St. Simons Island and Jekyll Island, both of which are detailed below. There is also a Visitor Center on US 17 at the St. Simons Causeway and a Welcome Center on Interstate 95 Southbound between Exits 8/38 & 9/42.

St. Simons Island

St Simons driving tour mapBeing the largest and most historic of the islands, St. Simons has the greatest variety of things to do and see. History lovers will certainly want to visit the **Fort Frederica National Monument**, ☎ 912-638-3639, www.nps.gov/parklists/index/fofr.html, Route 9, situated on a strategically important bluff on the south branch of the Altamaha River. In 1736, 44 men and 72 women and children arrived, together constructing a fortified town that thrived and, by the 1740s, had increased its population to over 500 citizens. It was the military headquarters on the frontier with Spain and the largest British Colonial fortification in North America. It came into its own in 1742, when the total of its resources, and more, were enlisted to defeat the Spanish in The Battle of Bloody Marsh. By 1749, the military threat to the Georgia coast had been extinguished, and the fort's regiment was disbanded. Today, visitors can stroll through the ruins of the fortifications, barracks and homes, as preserved and maintained by the National Park Service. We would also recommend a stop by the fort's Visitor Center, which houses a museum and an auditorium showing the informative film *This is Frederica*. The park's grounds are open from 8 am to 5 pm daily, with the Visitor Center opening one hour later. The site of The Battle of Bloody Marsh, located off Demere Road and operated by the National Park Service in conjunction with the fort, is well marked and open to the public from 9 am to 5 pm.

The **St. Simons Lighthouse and Museum of Coastal History**, ☎ 912-638-4666, www.novagate.com/~schoonerman/stsim.htm, is found on the historic site of Fort St. Simons, built to protect the southern tip of the island. The original lighthouse was constructed in the very early 19th century, but was blown up by Confederate forces in 1861 to prevent its use by Federal troops. The present structure, one of only five surviving light towers in Georgia and one of the oldest continuously



St. Simons Island Driving Tour

The number in parentheses after each stop indicates the mileage to the next point of interest.

1. Retreat Plantation (.7)
2. Fishing Pier (.2)
3. Museum of Coastal History & St. Simons Lighthouse (1.1)
4. St. Simons Beach (Massengale Park) (1.4)
5. Bloody Marsh Battle Site (National Park Service) (5.2)
6. Sea Island (7)
7. Fort Frederica National Monument (.2)
8. Christ Church, Frederica

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working lighthouses in the nation, was built in 1872. Visitors are welcome to climb the 129 steps to the 104-foot high summit, which offers an unparalleled panorama of the Golden Isles. Still in use as a navigational aid, and now fully automated, its Fresnel lens shines up to 20 miles out to sea and guides traffic entering the St. Simons Sound. The Museum of Coastal History has restored the Lightkeeper's Cottage, which contains exhibits chronicling the history of the lighthouse and the way of life of a turn-of-the-century lighthouse keeper and his family. Both attractions are open, Monday to Saturday, 10 am to 5 pm and Sunday 1:30 to 5 pm.

Christ Church, Frederica, at Frederica Road just past the Lawrence Road fork, is believed to be the second-oldest Episcopal Church in Georgia and the third oldest in the United States. Working under the auspices of the Christ Church in Savannah whose rector was John Wesley, his brother, Charles Wesley, became Frederica's first Protestant minister in the 1740s. In 1808, the legislature granted 100 acres around the town of Frederica for use as a church, and income from rental of the land was used, in 1820, to fund the building of one. Unfortunately, this was taken over and partially destroyed by Union troops during the Civil War. During the mid-1880s it was rebuilt, by Anson Phelps Dodge, Jr., as a memorial to his wife, Ellen, who died during their 'round-the-world' honeymoon. Constructed of wood in the cruciform design with a trussed Gothic roof and steeple, it features beautiful stained-glass windows. Its cemetery is the last resting-place for many of the island's earliest settlers and most of her eminent citizens. It is advisable to visit after 2 pm, at which time a docent is usually present to undertake tours and answer questions, for which a donation is required.

St. Simons Island and Sea Island have more than their quota of beautiful homes and gardens but the majority of these are owned privately and not open to the public. All is not lost, however. Plan a visit to coincide with the third Saturday in March.

On that day, the Episcopal Churchwomen of Christ Church sponsor the annual **Tour of Homes and Gardens**, ☎ 912-638-8683. This tour has been conducted for almost 50 years in succession. In 1999, the price of a ticket was $25 if purchased on the day of the tour; ticket proceeds benefit local charities and are tax deductible.

The Village is found on Mallery Street at the southern end of the island, close to the fishing pier and the lighthouse. It is the social center of the island. In addition to an interesting collection of small stores and restaurants here, you will find the **St. Simons Visitors Center** in the Old Casino Building at Neptune Park. It is open daily from 9 am to 5 pm.

To see and learn more about the above places, and for a good overview of the island, book with **St. Simons Trolley Island Tours**, ☎ 912-638-8954. These tours last 1½ hours and depart from the Pier in the Village daily between March 16th and September 30th at 11 am and 1 pm, and at 1 pm Tuesday through Saturday the rest of the year. The cost is $12 per person.

Our Suggestion: If you want an exclusive tour for just yourselves – maybe a romantic sunset tour – rent a trolley at $100 an hour, with a minimum fee of $150.

Tree Spirits?

Among the stranger things that will be pointed out to you on the tour are the Tree Spirits of St. Simons Island. Majestic oak trees proliferate over the island and, if you look closely at certain of them, you will see the image of a weathered face staring back at you. These images, usually wearing sad, forlorn expressions, have been carved by skilled craftsmen to immortalize the countless sailors who lost their lives at sea aboard the mighty sailing ships once made from St. Simons oak.

You might also learn that, besides the more familiar Spanish Moss – which actually isn't moss at all, many of these oaks and other trees are adorned with clusters of resurrection ferns. As with the moss, these ferns are not parasites; being epiphytic, they produce their own food by photosynthesis. In times of drought they can lose up to 70% of their water, curling up, turning brown and often being mistaken for dead. With the onset of rain, however, they spring back to their natural shape and color – thus their name, resurrection ferns.

Obviously, being surrounded by water, marine-related activities are popular on St. Simons Island. If you would like a guided tour of the narrow tidal creeks between St. Simons Island and Sea Island, with a running commentary, anecdotes about the wildlife, and a chance to discover the unique features of the marsh ecosystem, we recommend you contact **Salt Marsh Nature Tours**, ☎ 912-638-9354, www.marshtours.com. Operating a 24-foot pontoon boat with a shallow draft ideal for getting close to the cordgrass *Spartina Alterniflora*, Captains Jeanne and Jim supply binoculars and books in all seasons and lined parkas in the colder weather, on a 1¾-hour ride that costs just $40 per person. You will get a close look at the beautiful birds of the marsh, likely see bottlenose dolphins and possibly catch sight of a river otter, mink or alligator. At low tide you may even get to handle oysters. If you have different sorts of adventures in mind, Salt Marsh offers a variety of other cruises: a Dolphin Quest, sunset cruises, moonlight boat rides, two- or three-hour excursions to Pelican Split, and a three-hour history tour to Hampton Point. These range in price between $30 and $55 per person, depending upon their length.

If your idea of fun leans more towards participation sports, make contact with **Golden Isles Watersports**, ☎ 912-638-SAIL (7245). Located at the Golden Isles Marina, they offer airboat rides for $15 per person; para sailing up to a height of 600 feet for $50; and Jet Ski rentals and tours at $40 a half-hour and $65 for one hour.

Kayaking, too, is becoming increasingly popular. **SouthEast Adventure Outfitters**, ☎ 912-638-6732, ☎ 912-ME-TO-SEA, e-mail southeastadventure@coastalgeorgia.com, www.gacoast.com/nav-

igator/sea.html, at 313 Mallery in Pier in the Village, has many tours available, complete with knowledgeable guides. A two-hour Introduction to sea kayaking, while exploring the Marshes of Glynn, costs $30; a three-hour St. Simons Sea Kayak Tour is $40 and the fee for a half-day excursion from their other headquarters in Brunswick to St. Simons is $55. Farther afield, and sometimes even overnight, they offer trips to the Altamaha and Satilla rivers, Pelican Split, Cumberland and Sapelo Islands and the Okefenokee Swamp.

However, if you are in search of *the* most romantic cruise for the most special occasion, and are prepared to splurge for such memories, you will look to **Lady Patricia Charters**, ☎/fax 912-638-8450, 511 Marsh Circle, St. Simons Island, GA 31522. The 48-foot classic motor yacht *Lady Patricia*, built by the renowned Elco boat works in 1936, is the recipient of numerous awards, including "Best Classic Power Boat" recognition from the Museum of Yachting in Newport, Rhode Island. She went to war as part of the US Navy in 1942, and served for several decades as a pleasure craft in upstate New York before undergoing a decade-long restoration process beginning in 1987. The combination of her classic lines and period detailing with state-of-the-art electronics and lavish guest comforts have created a grand expression of vintage motor yachting. Onboard you will find three staterooms, a delightful salon, an open-air fantail at the stern, an ample galley with a stocked beverage bar, and full air-conditioning. So, if your dream is to romance your loved one in an ambiance of gracious elegance, floating along as the setting sun slips below the horizon, giving way to a glistening lunar sheen upon the waters, you will disembark, two hours later, with a wallet that is $350 lighter and a lifetime of memories.

Fishing is an ever-popular pastime, and today it seems that more and more people are getting hooked on fly-fishing. In this neck of the woods, the main man to see is **Captain Larry Kennedy**, who operates out of his store, the **Bedford Sportsman South**, ☎ 912-638-5454 or fax 638-5493, 3405 Frederica Road. Either he or his son Mike will be pleased to take you fly-fishing or light tackle fishing. The inshore action offers everything

from redfish to flounder, and the offshore holds treasures of tarpon, shark, redfish, sea trout and mackerel. Rates range between $250 and $300 for a half-day, and catch-and-release fishing is encouraged. As they like to say, "wild fish are too valuable to be caught only once." The Orvis-endorsed Bedford Sportsman South has on display a full range of fly-fishing equipment and accessories, offers casting and tying instruction, and stocks a wide range of hiking boots, backpacks, sports clothing, gifts, and Battenkill luggage.

Once you are sufficiently acquainted with the aquatic side of St. Simons, it is time to consider a bird's-eye perspective on the barrier islands. **Air Tours**, ☎ 912-222-2448, operating out of McKinnon Airport, will take you up and over nine barrier islands, while the pilot gives an intriguing narrative of the rich history and the ecological and recreational opportunities of coastal Georgia. Rates begin at $25 per person and vary according to the itinerary selected.

There is no shortage of shops on St. Simons Island, and some of the more interesting ones are found at **The Shoppes at Redfern Village**, whose name carries with it an interesting anecdote. Paul Redfern, one of the nation's early aviators, took off from Sea Island's beach in 1927 attempting an historical first flight to Brazil. Unfortunately, he didn't make it; many years later his plane was discovered in an impenetrable mountainous area of that country. Later in the year of his fateful journey, the first airport on St. Simons Island (located upon a part of the land now occupied by the village) was named in Redfern's honor. Though McKinnon Airfield replaced the airfield in 1938, the village retains the name of the unfortunate aviator.

Among the village shops, one of the best is **Wild Birds Unlimited**, ☎ 912-638-1442, 888-638-1422, fax 634-9231 or e-mail wbussi@technonet.com, at 312 Redfern Village. If you have enjoyed bird watching in the island's natural environment, there is no reason why you might not develop a bird paradise in your own backyard. Although Wild Birds Unlimited stores are franchised, you will not find the same merchandise in each one. Of course, there will be bird feeders in every shape and size imaginable, food for your feathered friends, a corner for humming-

birds, and deterrents to those pesky seed-stealing squirrels. Each proprietor, however, is also free to stock his/her favorite accessories and even unrelated gift items. This store's owner, John E. Johnson, has on display numerous, and various, items that we are sure you'll find of interest. The prints adorning the walls, for instance, are by a local artist who just happens to work in the store. And you will see decorated mailboxes, small decoys, chimes, clocks, thermometers, outside water fountains for birds, indoor and outdoor decorative fountains, flags, candles, cards and books. On a more practical note, look for an all-natural, non-poisonous, insect repellent called Swamp Buddy. Three things in particular commanded our attention: an exquisite Hampton Bay brass bird feeder on a pole which, at $689, will definitely not grace our garden; a nifty miniature mailbox in which you can leave notes for other members of your family; and Bird-Lovers' gift baskets, which make great thank-you gifts for your babysitters back home.

Sea Island

All activities are under the auspices of The Cloister, although many – such as golf, shooting, tennis and riding – are actually located on St. Simons Island. In any event, for the sake of clarity, they are all detailed in the *Sweet Dreams* section.

Little St. Simons Island

The first thing to do on Little St. Simons Island is slow down and take a few moments to catch your breath. Then, forget about the rest of the world, concentrate on your time together, and share new adventures and discoveries. You will find seven miles of private beaches for swimming, sunbathing, shelling and strolling. Across the acres of ancient forests there are 15 miles of trails suitable for hiking, biking – bikes are supplied free – and horseback riding, with free guided tours and explorations. Along one of the more scenic of these trails, the two-mile **Old House Road** follows the western side of the maritime forest and passes through the island's largest prehistoric archaeological site. The island was once a seasonal camp for the Guale Indians, who in the winter months foraged for oys-

ters in the local creeks and rivers. Their legacy is a vast area of oyster shell "middens" that date from 700 to 1650 AD. Aside from their historical interest, these have served to enhance the ecology. Calcium that has leaked from the oyster shells over the centuries has buffered the acid soil, giving rise to dense growths of southern red cedar, and providing perfect growing conditions for two rare plants – the Florida privet and tiny-leafed buckthorn. A little to the south of the middens, a tabby and brick chimney stands on a slight bluff overlooking the marshes and Old House Creek, all that remains of one of the earliest structures built here by European settlers in the early 1800s.

The Lodge at Little St. Simons offers the opportunity to participate in guided interpretive programs, hiking and other activities. Daily tours are schedule by truck, foot, watercraft, horseback, or any combination thereof, designed to expose guests to each of the four distinct ecosystems on the island: maritime forest, wetlands, salt marsh and beach.

This 10,000-acre island, virtually unchanged for centuries, provides a home to the most eclectic array of birds and animals imaginable. Bird-lovers can fashion numerous avian adventures involving the over 240 different species that have been recorded on the island, some of which are endangered. Each spring, colorful songbirds alight on the island during their northward migration. In the fall, the shorebird migration begins and the brightly colored neo-tropical species begin their southward journey. The ongoing sand build-up on the island results in large areas of inter-tidal flats and sandbars that are attractive feeding areas for shorebirds. The best time for shore birding is at high tide, when they retreat to the upper reaches of the sandbars and beaches, or just after as the water is receding. The north end of the Main Beach, near the mouth of Bass Creek, provides an ideal location from which to study these birds. Especially fascinating are the tall and elegant wading birds, such as herons and egrets, best spotted in the island's marshes, tidal creeks and rivers – especially at Myrtle Pond, at the old airstrip, and in the high marsh area east of Marsh Road. If you are keen enough to wake early in the morning and

leave your romancing until the evening, join up with one of the island naturalists familiar with the many species here and their habitats. They lead tours and can assist in locating the birds and providing identification.

You are likely to see **European fallow deer**. These were introduced to the island in the 1920s by the original owner and now roam freely. If you visit in the fall, the deer's mating season, you may hear the lovelorn creatures "barking." Spring visitors will delight to see the tiny fawns, born in late spring and early summer, springing after their mothers on unsure, spindly legs. Tree frogs, armadillos and shy river otters, too, can sometimes put in an appearance, as can the intriguingly appealing, but rather dangerous, **American alligator**.

The latter species is literally a living relic of the dinosaur age and has essentially remained unchanged for 65 million years. These creatures abide in the coastal plain region of the southeastern United States, from the Carolinas through Texas, with the only other member of its genus found in the Yangtze River basin of China. By the middle of the 20th century, the population in the US had declined to an alarming low – sacrificed to the lucrative market for alligator hide and meat. Its numbers have, however, increased remarkably since protective laws were enacted by both state and federal legislatures in the mid-1960s.

Alligators are a critical component of the ecosystems in which they reside, particularly the seasonal freshwater wetlands found on the barrier islands. During the summer months, when the water level subsides, the "wallows" they dig as a refuge for themselves until the water level rises again, serve to protect neighboring fish and amphibians as well. On Little St. Simons Island they play a complicated and important role in the ecology of colonial-nesting wading birds – at the rookery of great and snowy egrets at Willow Pond, for example. Here, wily alligators lie in wait beneath the rookery for the occasional egg or chick to fall from the safety of its nest. In nature's law, this has its purpose and, far from damaging the rookery as it might seem, actually benefits it. The alligators' presence acts as a de-

terrent to foraging raccoons who, left to their own devices, would cause much more damage.

Should you be on the island in mid-April, the male alligators' deep growling emanating from ponds and sloughs will surely alert you to the onset of the courtship season. Within dome-shaped nests built in June, 35 to 50 eggs incubate for approximately 65 days. The hatchlings, six to eight inches long, are extremely vulnerable and the mortality rate approaches a staggering 80%. The young live in close proximity to their birthplace for two to three years, and survivors of early days may live as long as 35 to 50 years. As water is essential to regulating their body temperatures, they are seldom found far from an aquatic habitat. Smaller ones eat frogs, insects and small fish, while older ones enjoy a diet of turtles, snakes, small mammals and even smaller alligators. Though grisly tales abound, alligators have a natural fear of humans and, thus, the majority of their negative encounters with man are due to our foolishness in offering them food. The lessons here are "keep your distance" and "please do not feed the animals." Alligators can travel faster than most humans on the ground over a short distance and can be dangerous when cornered or provoked.

If you want to explore the waterways on your own, your choice of canoes or 14-foot Carolina skiffs will take you deep into the marshes and along the shoreline. Besides providing an ideal way to catch sight of the dolphins, this may encourage you to do a bit of angling. If so, gear and bait are provided and there are plenty of fish awaiting your attention. Fly-fishing is gaining popularity, and some of the best saltwater fly-fishing on the Georgia coast can be found on and around Little St. Simons Island. You can, of course, go it alone, but the Lodge at Little St. Simons offers instructional programs and excursions that may be tailored to any level of expertise. These, though, are not included in the basic rates.

Don't fail to allow some time for simply taking it easy. Particularly inviting is the peaceful porch with rocking chairs and wonderful views of the Marshes of Glynn. In agreeable weather, splash about in the outdoor swimming pool that is fed by an artesian well.

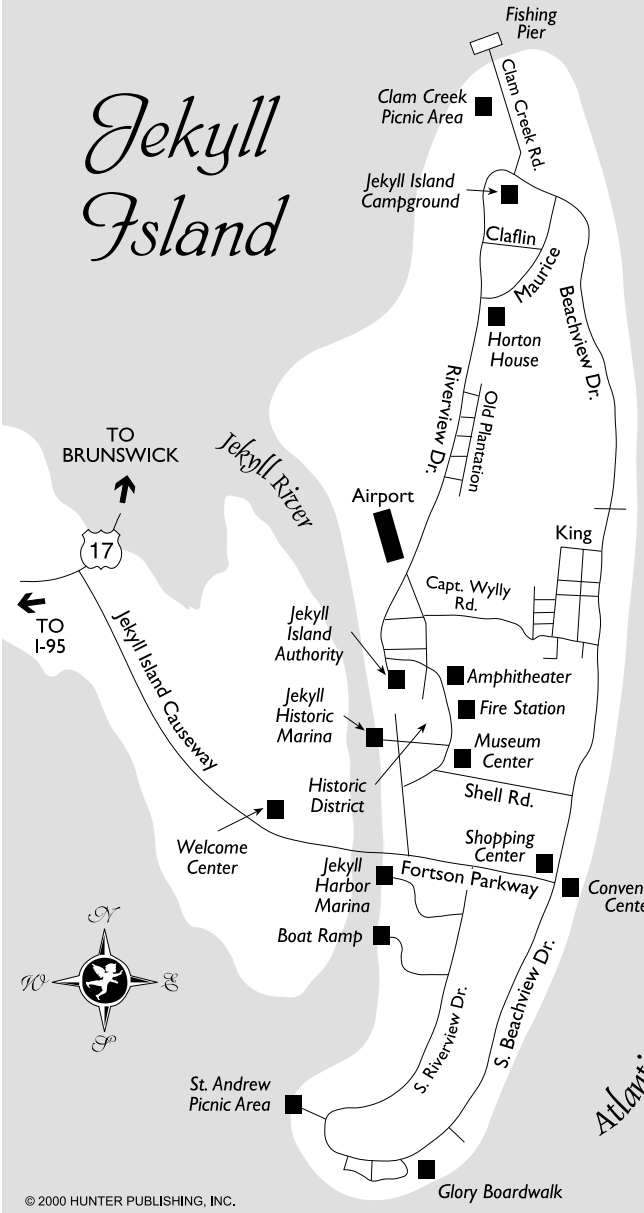
The ambiance on Little St. Simons Island, one of the last such refuges along the Atlantic coastline, is as close to nature as you will find anywhere. It is an ideal setting in which to rekindle the spirit of your romance.

Jekyll Island

Visitors to Jekyll Island will be curious about the 240-acre **National Historic Landmark District**, consisting of 33 structures, including the Jekyll Island Clubhouse and numerous mansion-sized cottages. Instead of hoofing it, an informative and relaxing option is a narrated horse-drawn carriage ride operated by **Victoria's Carriages & Trail Rides**, ☎ 912-635-9500. Daytime tours are offered between 10 am and 3 pm, lasting approximately 40 minutes and departing from the Visitors Center on Stable Road. Romantic evening carriage rides, from 5:30 to 9:30 pm, last approximately 30 minutes and depart from the Jekyll Island Club Hotel. The regular fare for either is $10 per person.

Our Suggestion: Opt for the evening hours, spend a little extra and book a private carriage ride at a charge of $60 an hour.

Once you have been suitably introduced to the exterior of these historic landmarks, track back to the very beautiful **Faith Chapel**. Constructed in 1904 as a non-denominational church for Club members, its main claim to fame are two exquisite stained-glass windows. The one in the west façade, an original by the incomparable Louis C. Tiffany, is one of the few such works signed by him. The other window, above the altar and also signed, is the work of David Maitland Armstrong (Tiffany's protégé, who served as Second Counsel General to Italy) and his daughter, Helen Armstrong.


Jekyll Island
Fishing Pier
Clam Creek Picnic Area
Clam Creek Rd.
Jekyll Island Campground
Claflin
Maurice
Beachview Dr.
Horton House
Riverview Dr.
Old Plantation
TO BRUNSWICK
Jekyll River
Airport
King
17
Capt. Wylly Rd.
TO I-95
Jekyll Island Causeway
Jekyll Island Authority
Amphitheater
Jekyll Historic Marina
Fire Station
Museum Center
Historic District
Shell Rd.
Welcome Center
Shopping Center
Jekyll Harbor Marina
Fortson Parkway
Convention Center
Boat Ramp
S. Riverview Dr.
S. Beachview Dr.
Atlantic Ocean
St. Andrew Picnic Area
Glory Boardwalk
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Naturally, visitors will wish to become better acquainted with the fascinating nature of Jekyll Island. While there are a variety of options, we suggest you begin by exploring on your own, by foot or on bicycles, the 20 miles of scenic paths.

The **Coastal Encounters Nature Center**, ☎ 912-635-9102, 100 South Riverview Drive, deserves your attention also. Open Monday through Saturday from 9 am to 5 pm, the site includes an indoor educational center with aquariums, touch tanks and a variety of displays. Outdoors, a 17-acre salt pond is bordered by salt marsh and the Intracoastal Waterway to the west, and maritime forest and the Atlantic Ocean to the east. In other words, it provides an ideal environment for bird watchers and, as Jekyll Island plays host to migrating birds on the Atlantic Flyway in the spring and fall, it offers spotters a chance to see species not usually found in these climes. If you have the time and interest, then their Barrier Island Ecology walks should not be missed. A three-hour walk taking in three ecosystems – the marsh, the maritime forest and the sea – costs $18 per person, or you can explore the ecosystem of your choice at a rate of $10 per hour.

Jekyll Island is also home to the endangered **loggerhead sea turtle** during the nesting season from mid-May to mid-August. Mature female turtles weigh 175 to 350 lbs. and range from 21 inches to 45 inches long. The count usually is 90 to 130 each season. Females are capable of laying four to six clutches of eggs, consisting of 80 to 160 eggs each, during a nesting season. They dig a hole 18 to 20 inches deep, lay their eggs, and cover them with sand before returning to the ocean. Interestingly, the sand temperature in the nest will determine the sex of the hatchling – warmer for females and cooler for males. After an incubation period of 58 to 60 days, 60-90% of the eggs actually hatch, emerging in a swimming motion through the sand in their haste to reach the ocean. Males never return to shore after hatching, but it is thought that the females record and carry with them a chemical imprint of the beach on which they hatch, coming ashore to play their part in procreation beginning at age 15 to 20 years.

If this brief explanation has piqued your interest, we encourage you to participate in the guided **Turtle Walks**, held Monday to Saturday nights, from June through August, beginning at 9:30 pm. These depart from the Visitors Center and may last until 11 pm, or even midnight, depending upon the number of sightings. The cost is $5 per adult and reservations are required. No flashlights or cameras are permitted. Call ☎ 912-635-2284 in advance of your trip to avoid disappointment.

Turtle-Watching

If you prefer to turtle-watch on your own, here are a few turtle tips. Never disturb a turtle crawling to and from the ocean. Once one has begun nesting, watch only from a distance and do not crowd around a nesting turtle. Never attempt to ride a turtle and do not shine a light in its eyes or take flash photos. If you see a dead or injured turtle, or come upon someone harassing one, call ☎ 800-2-SAVE-ME, or the DNR at 912-264-7218.

Though these fascinating creatures have been in existence for over 250 million years, exploitation, commercial fishing and beach development have put them on the endangered species list. But you can play a part in ensuring its future success; and you don't even have to be there to do it. Through the Adopt A Loggerhead program, for $35 you can adopt an adult mother. This includes an official certificate, photograph, all sighting dates, hatching announcements, turtle sticker and a poster. For $25 you can Adopt a Nest, receiving an official certificate, information on the mother, hatching announcement, success rate and a turtle sticker. For $15, Adopt a Hatchling, and receive an official certificate, nest information, hatching announcement, and success rate.

Our Suggestion: If you have a child or children at home, adopt a turtle in their name for a wonderfully different educational gift.

To adopt, or for further information, contact the **Jekyll Island Authority Turtle Patrol**, ☎ 912-635-2284, 196 Stable Road, Jekyll Island, GA 31527.

On the topic of endangered species, the coastal waters off southern Georgia and northern Florida were, themselves, designated a critical habitat in 1995. During the winter months, they serve as birthing grounds to the **Northern Right Whale**, the official mammals of Georgia. While adults reach an average of 50 feet long and weigh in at around 60 tons, they are very rare and thought to be close to extinction.

There are also plenty of things to do for those with energy to burn. Swim at the 10 miles of beautiful beaches, or at **Summer Waves**, ☎ 912-635-2074, an 11-acre water park with many attractions. The **Jekyll Island Tennis Complex** has 13 clay courts that rent for $14 an hour during the day and $16 at night. For golf, the island's 63 holes make it the largest public golf resort in the state of Georgia. If you are partial to horseback riding, head for **Victoria's Carriage's & Trail Rides**, ☎ 912-635-9500, at the Visitor's Center on Stable Road. In addition to the carriage rides mentioned above, they offer either a one-hour beach ride at $30 per person or a 1½-hour beach ride at $40 per person.

If shopping is your favorite sport, you will find within the National Historic Landmark District a collection of shops that blend easily with this environment. A good second-hand bookstore is not easily found these days, so it is a pleasant surprise to come across **Jekyll Books and Antiques Inc.**, ☎ 912-635-3077, at 101 Old Plantation Road. The shop makes its home in the old twice-moved, Infirmary and seems to have an ethereal resident – a young girl with long dark hair, wearing a silver brooch, who has been seen wandering around by many. Alongside the assortment of new, used and rare books, you will find an array of antiques, photographs, prints, maps, bookends, huge puppets, and even a children's room. Our favorites were

the collection of Shellas Chimes, as well as the extraordinary and sometimes risqué shapes and forms cut from metal and painted by Judi Bomberger. Interestingly, this is the only place open on Jekyll Island on Christmas Day, when it becomes the social center for the island, and guests, fortified by cheese and wine, often give impromptu poetry readings. On all other days of the year it is open from 9:30 am to 5:30 pm.

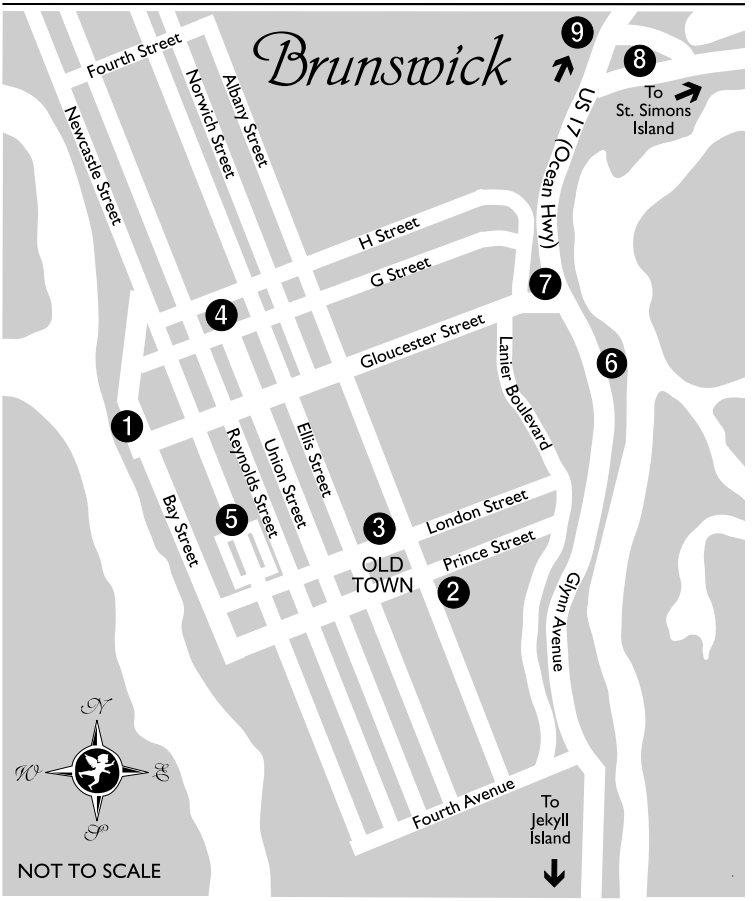
Nature's Cottage, ☎ 912-635-3933, at 21 Pier Road, offers a fine array of art, books and gifts devoted to the beauty of nature. It is a Harmony Kingdom Royal dealer, and has, among a proliferation of items, animals made by Big Sky Carvers from Montana, beach scenes hand-painted by Rex Dugger, Baltic Amber, fine Maruri porcelain collectibles, US-made puppets, attractively carved fish, nature jewelry, numerous soft toys and an educational children's corner. It is open from 10 am to 5 pm daily.

On the same street is **The Cottage on Jekyll**, ☎ 912-635-2643, at 32 Pier Road. The emphasis is on specialty gifts and crafts, and you will find collections of Russian and Limoges boxes, Classic Pooh Bears and, as it is a Boyd's Bronze Paw dealer, all kinds of nattily dressed bears. Also look for teapots, both miniature and full-sized, spirit chasers from Bali, and Lithopane porcelain lamps and interchangeable light shades. Angels, too, are predominant, and coexist with dolls and fairies, which might be found hiding among the unusual collection of miniature Victorian shoes. To occupy daughters while mothers are shopping, there is an innovative corner where little girls can play dress up.

For more information on other attractions and events, contact the **Jekyll Island Welcome Center**, ☎ 912-635-3636, 877 4JEKYLL (453-5955), www.jekyllisland.com, which is located on the Jekyll Island Causeway.

Brunswick

Although Brunswick has its share of sights, it must be said that the main attractions here are the beaches. There is one activity, however, that, even though it will not appeal to all, may



Brunswick Driving Tour

The number in parentheses after each stop indicates the mileage to the next point of interest.

1. Shrimp Docks (1.1)
2. Lovers' Oak (.4)
3. Old Town National Register District (.7)
4. Courthouse (.1)
5. Main Street Brunswick (1.1)
6. Overlook Park (.2)
7. Lanier Oak (.2)
8. Visitors Center (14.7)
9. Hofwyl-Broadfield Plantation

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be in your cards. It is, in fact, one of only two of its type in Georgia, the other being at Tybee Island near Savannah.

Golden Isles Cruise Lines, Inc., ☎ 800-842-0115 (for tickets and reservations), based at Brunswick Landing Marina, Newcastle and K Streets, in Downtown Brunswick, operates the nearly 200-foot *Emerald Princess* as a casino and dinner cruise ship. She sails Tuesday to Saturday between 7 pm and 1 am ($35), on Saturday from 11 am to 4 pm ($19.98) and on Sunday from 1 to 6 pm ($35). Prices are per couple, with daytime cruises including a brunch buffet, and the evening cruises offering a dinner buffet. All cruises include shipboard entertainment; music and dancing; access to casino gambling games, such as roulette, blackjack, Caribbean poker, craps, live poker and slot machines; and a return-to-port appetizer. Advance reservations are required, boarding begins one hour prior to departure time and any tickets not claimed 45 minutes before sailing will be subject to forfeiture.

Sweet Dreams

St. Simons Island

The **King and Prince Beach & Golf Resort**, ☎ 912-638-3631, 800-342-0212, fax 638-7699, www.kingandprince.com, is at Arnold Road at Downing Street, PO Box 20798, St. Simons Island, GA 31522. It first opened in the fall of 1935 as a private club, with an ambiance chosen by its owners to reflect the regal atmosphere. Only three months later a fire attributed to arson burned it to the ground. It was subsequently rebuilt in the lovely Spanish Colonial style for which it is famous today. The fashionable parlors, bar, ballroom, outdoor palm garden and beachfront boardwalk quickly established for the club a reputation for elegance and hospitality. During the 1930s numerous renovations saw the addition of a terrazzo dance floor and orchestra stage to the ballroom and, in 1938, the celebrated

King and Prince stained-glass pictorials were installed. Integral to the creation of the resort's ambiance, these depict classic scenes of St. Simons Island's beauty and heritage.

On July 2, 1941, a festive five-day celebration marked the opening to the public of the King and Prince Hotel. Designed with lovely views of the ocean and to fully take advantage of its breezes, were 110 guest rooms equipped with ceiling fans and circulating ice water. That grand summer season, however, would be the last until the end of World War II. Not that the hotel was idle during those years. Rather, it was home to US Navy personnel, who established a radar station on the property. Upon reopening in 1947, it quickly re-established its reputation as an outstanding resort with old-country hospitality. In 1972, the property was sold, and the new owners undertook a massive restoration and development program that retained the original grandeur but added English Colonial décor. It was sold one last time in 1980, and an expansion begun three years later saw the addition of 55 oceanfront rooms with balconies, two dining rooms and a spectacular atrium lobby with indoor pool and whirlpool.

The owners have demonstrated a commitment to maintaining and improving the property, and presently their guests can choose from among 140 guest rooms and 44 two- and three-bedroom beach villas. Each has a private balcony, phones with dataports, remote control cable television, coffeemaker, and in-room safe. Some have a kitchenette. Weekend rates in the hotel, for an oceanfront or poolside room, are $120, $140 or $185, according to season, with other rooms priced seasonally at $95, $115 or $155.

The oceanfront **Delegal Room** serves a daily breakfast buffet and Sunday brunch, the seaside **Tavern Grill** offers lunch and dinner daily, and the seasonal **King's Terrace** dishes up a poolside lunch. Recreationally, the indoor pool and hot tub are joined by four outdoor pools; four Rubico tennis courts – with a fee of $10 per hour; an exercise room; bike, sailboat and kayak rentals and the 18-hole Hampton Club golf course.

Sea Island

The Cloister, ☎ 912-638-3611, 800-SEA-ISLA (732-4752), www.seaisland.com, synonymous with Sea Island, is an international institution in its own right. We have described the history of The Cloister in detail above (page 478), and it remains today a resort of rare charm and distinction.

The 286 guest rooms, including 32 suites, are all elegantly furnished. Each has either king-sized or double bed, private bathroom, television, telephone and modem port. Prices are dictated by location (either riverside or oceanfront), type of room, the building in which it is located and, of course, the season. The system is far too complicated to chart here, but we can say that they range from a low of $141 for the smallest room in the lowest season upwards to $433 for an Oceanfront Parlor Suite in the high season. Rates are quoted per person per day, and are subject to state and local taxes, a 15% service charge and, for stays of less than five days, a surcharge of $4 per person per day. Let us quickly clarify that The Cloister operates on the Full American Plan and offers a host of other services. If you will be traveling by air or by rail, shuttle or executive limousine service is provided to and from the airports at Brunswick (Glynn Co Jetport) or St. Simons Island (McKinnon), the Amtrak station at Jesup, or Jacksonville, Florida – all for a fee and with 24 hours' notice. The Cloister accepts most major credit cards, and checks.

The Cloister's Full American Plan allows three meals daily, featuring a rather unusual range of menus and served in a variety of settings. If you choose the Main Dining Room for breakfast, seasonal luncheon or Sunday evening buffet, then come suitably dressed. Men must wear a collared shirt, although a jacket is optional, and short shorts or jogging attire are inappropriate. At dinner, a five-course dining experience complemented by an extensive wine list and live entertainment, coats

and ties are required for men and for young men over 12. On Wednesday and Saturday evenings, gowns or cocktail dresses and dinner jackets with black ties are the preferred, but optional, styles of dress. At the Beach Club dress is casual for breakfast or luncheon, and swimwear is acceptable with a cover-up and shoes or sandals. At dinner – either The Cloister's amazing evening seafood buffet which is a Beach Club tradition, or a sumptuous à la carte menu – men and young men over the age of 12 wear collared shirts and slacks, with jackets optional. In the clubhouse of the Sea Island Golf Club, once the corn and fodder barn of the antebellum Retreat Plantation, men and young men over the age of 12 are required to wear a collared shirt for lunch, while for dinner collared shirts and slacks are mandatory and jackets optional. A similar code is in effect at the St. Simons Island Club where, in its charming Lowcountry clubhouse, guests can enjoy distinctive Southern cuisine. Of course, if you wish to dine in private, room service menus are served between 7 am and midnight. They offer both simple and superlative dining, from a Continental breakfast to an elegant dinner.

Guests can also avail themselves of Beach Club privileges, such as the salon, lockers, steam room and dry sauna – all complimentary. Adjacent to the Beach Club, on a section of the miles of unspoiled beach, you can rent a cabana for $20 a day, a catamaran for $45 per hour, a single sea kayak for $18 per hour, or a tandem kayak for $25 per hour. Biking is a popular way of getting around the island, and the side streets also offer a tour of beautiful homes. Cycles can be rented at $5 for the first hour, $9 for a half-day, $14 for the first full day and $6 per day after that. Boat and nature cruises are also available for $30, $40 or $55 per person for one, two and three hours respectively; the minimum charge is the equivalent dollar price for four people. Waterway fishing, either from The Cloister Dock opposite the hotel motor entrance or from the saltwater creeks, rivers and adjoining inlet and sounds, is a popular pastime. Ac-

cording to the season, you may find yourself catching speckled sea trout, tarpon, bass, drum, flounder, whiting, croaker or sheepshead. The Cloister also has private stables, where you can embark upon a one-hour marsh ride for $30, a two-hour beach ride for $58, or a guided nature ride for $75. Instruction is also available and, if you happen to bring your own horse along, the boarding fee is $30 per night.

The Cloister also has world-class facilities for golf, tennis, and shooting, and a state-of-the-art spa. Playing fees for golfers for 18 holes are $115 per person daily and $70 for nine holes, and include cart, practice range, club cleaning and storage. At the shooting school you can take aim at skeet, trap, five-stand sporting and sporting clays for $45 a round, inclusive of all equipment. If tennis is your game, the court fee is $15 per day, doubles or singles, and if courts are available then play is unlimited.

Special packages, requiring a three-night minimum stay, are offered for those guests wishing to focus on sporting or spa activities. We will detail here only the two luxurious and very romantic three-day packages. The Spa Retreat offers each of you two massages, a soothing sea stones massage, multi-active vitamin facial, one-hour reflexology, nutritional consultation with body composition analysis, fitness consultation and half an hour of personal training. The Ultimate Relaxation allows you three massages, seaweed gel facial, Thermal Mineral Kur, one-hour reflexology and peach paraffin hand treatment. The cost for either of these, above and beyond the room rate and spa service gratuities, is $510 per person, plus tax. A spa package coordinator will tailor a visit to your specific needs and you will have the use of all spa facilities, entry to exercise classes, wellness lectures and demonstrations, and the option of spa cuisine. As space is limited, package reservations must be made four weeks in advance. Alternatively, consider one of The Spa's attractive day programs.

Norman's Suggestion: Guys, if you want to achieve two seemingly conflicting goals – indulging in a day's fishing or golf and putting your loved one in the mood for a romantic evening – the answer is simple. Book her for The Spa Classic, a full-day package for just $260. After a facial, massage, manicure, pedicure, use of the spa facilities and unlimited fitness classes, makeup application, shampoo and blow dry, she will be looking and feeling great.

If a package doesn't fit your itinerary or budget, you should at least pamper yourselves with a singular treatment. Whether you choose an exotic body treatment, a soothing massage, or a skin, hand or foot treatment, a visit to the Spa is guaranteed to spark your romance.

Little St. Simons Island

The **Lodge on Little St. Simons Island** is privately owned, and accommodations are limited to just 30 overnight guests. Contact the Lodge at ☎ 912-638-7472, 888-733-5774, fax 634-1811, e-mail lssi@mindspring.com, www.littleStSimonsIsland.com, PO Box 21078, St. Simons Island, GA 31522. Accessible only by boat from the Hampton River Club Marina on neighboring St. Simons Island 15 minutes away, it is an ideal place for nature lovers and those romantic couples who are seeking complete privacy in an unspoiled wilderness. Accommodations are in five charming cottages, with the Hunting Lodge, built in 1917 and reminiscent of a Hemingway novel, being the heart of social life on the island. The living room is the gathering spot for each evening's social hour, and the two guest rooms are filled with rustic furniture and family memorabilia. The Michael Cottage nearby offers the charm of a 1930s bungalow and, with living room, fireplace, two bedrooms and private bath, is an ideal hideaway for romantic couples. The Cedar House and

River Lodge, built in the 1980s, each offer a common sitting room and four bedrooms with private bath and private balcony affording spectacular views of the marshes. Finally, the Helen House, named in honor of the owner's daughter, was built in 1928 of traditional oyster-shell masonry known as "tabby." Its three comfortable bedrooms share two baths, and the spacious living room opens onto a screened porch with views over the expansive marshes and features a grand fireplace for warming fingers and toes in winter. All guest rooms feature air conditioning, ceiling fans and use of washer/dryer, with most having a fireplace, screened porch and deck. What you will not find are televisions, telephones or other such modern communications; they don't lend much to romantic ambiance anyway.

An alarm clock is superfluous as well. The folks on this private island wake each day to the tolling of a cast iron bell, which announces breakfast – a sumptuous meal served family-style in the Hunting Lodge Dining Room around long oak tables supported by local cedar tree trunks. Lunch can be taken in the same room or, if you prefer, the kitchen staff will prepare an Island Picnic replete with regional specialties for you to savor beachside or overlooking the rivers and marshes. You won't need a blanket either, at least not for the meal. The staff has set up picnic tables at some of the island's scenic spots for just such occasions. Later comes the time-honored tradition of the cocktail hour. When held indoors in the Hunting Lodge, it features scrumptious regional fare such as fried green tomatoes or roasted quail with a sweet and sour dipping sauce. Weather permitting, guests are invited outdoors onto the front lawn, where bushels of oysters and the appropriate accompaniments of cocktail sauce, crackers and lemons will be waiting beside a bonfire. Barge cruises aboard the *Captain Doug*, weather and tides permitting, are another cocktail hour favorite. You can take a sunset cruise along the island's waterways, with unobstructed views of the famous Marshes of Glynn, while partaking of delicacies such as local blue crabs, fresh steamed Georgia shrimp and cheese and crackers. A feast, to be sure, for all your senses. Dinner, taken communally in The Hunting Lodge Dining Room, is an abundance of home-style cuisine, often fea-

turing wild game and local seafood. Once each month, The Lodge offers a full-moon beach picnic, with baskets of blue crabs, in a pavilion overlooking a seven-mile stretch of beach so pristine and so deserted that it is easy to imagine that yours are the first feet ever to grace the sand.

But there is much more at The Lodge on Little St. Simons Island than accommodations and meals. In fact, there is an extensive array of activities, all of which are detailed in the *Things to Do* section and, what is more, they are all included in the price – which we think is a great idea. There is, after all, considerable merit in knowing before you leave that no surprise charges will mar an otherwise perfect getaway. And, you avoid the frustration of worrying over what you can and cannot afford. We know only too well, from hard experience, how much damage the little extras can do to a previously well-planned budget.

The climate on the island makes it a wonderful year-round destination. Temperatures in the spring range from 50-80° with a water temperature of around 66°. In summertime the mercury climbs higher, averaging 72°-90°, though coastal breezes moderate the heat and humidity and the water warms up to 80°. The fall, which arrives in mid-October, is delightful, with an air temperature of 50°-85°, clear days, low humidity, and water temperatures averaging 68°. Winters are brief and mild, with daytime highs in the 60s, lows in the 40s and the water a rather chilly 50°.

Dress on Little St. Simons Island is decidedly casual, comfortable and functional, with even cocktail hour and dinner being "dress as you like" affairs. But be sure to pack long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, waterproof shoes, rain gear, clothes to layer, bathing suit and beach shoes. A daypack, binoculars, camera, batteries, insect repellent, sunglasses, sunscreen and a good book or two are other suggested bring-alongs.

The High Season on Little St. Simons Island is October through June, and the Summer Season is July through September. There is a minimum two-night stay on weekends and during the holidays of Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas. Rates for two people during the High Season are $450 for the

Hunting Lodge, $500 for Cedar House/River Lodge or Helen House, and $550 per day for Michael Cottage. Summer Season rates are $325, $375 and $425, respectively. As stated above, these include all activities, boat transportation to and from the Hampton River Club Marina, three home-cooked meals each day – with picnic lunches available –and complimentary mixed drinks, beer, wine, soft drinks and juices. The only services that carry additional charges are the charter fishing guide, fly-fishing school, overnight dockage for private boats, and golf, tennis, historical tours and shopping trips on neighboring St. Simons Island and Sea Island.

At the Lodge on Little St. Simons Island, if you give into the temptation to add one more night to your trip, the innkeeper will reciprocate with a few extras – a complimentary bottle of champagne; two gift certificates, one for use in the small gift shop and the other entitling you both to a 50% discount off the third night's stay for your next romantic weekend; and a romantic picnic dinner for two.

Jekyll Island

The **Jekyll Island Club Hotel**, ☎ 912-635-2600, 800-535-9547, fax 635-2828, e-mail jiclub@technonet.com, www.jekyllclub.com, 371 Riverview Drive, Jekyll Island, is both Mobil Four-Star and AAA Four-Diamond-rated. It offers guests an unusual opportunity to experience a way of life that is all but forgotten. The first sight of this distinctive hotel, with charming American Queen Anne-style architecture, bay windows and verandas, will enchant you. Restored to its Victorian splendor in 1985, it has been designated a National Historic Landmark and a Historic Hotel of America.

Guests can choose from 134 rooms, including 21 one-bedroom suites. Each is appointed with faithfully reproduced 19th-century custom furnishings, a private bath, clock radio, color cable TV/VCR and phone with voice mail and data ports. The

most selective of romantic weekenders, though, will opt for the hotel's Presidential Suite. The parlor and bedroom, reached through double wooden doors, each have a cozy fireplace, and the luxurious bathroom features a Jacuzzi and chaise lounge. A spiral staircase gracefully ascends to the turret, where you will find an antique brass telescope for stargazing.

The Jekyll Island Club Hotel has three seasons: "High," March through the third week in August; "Shoulder," Fourth week in August through November; and "Low," December, January and February. Room rates vary according to season and the type of room, of which there are eight. We suggest that you consider a Suite at $199, a King Jacuzzi at $209, a Deluxe King Suite at $229, or the Presidential Suite at $279, with those prices being per night in the High Season. Each of these rooms carries a $20 reduction for the Shoulder Season and another $20 discount for the Low Season. There are two packages that will be of special interest to romantic couples. The Romantic Fantasy, at either $575, $529 or $469, includes two nights of deluxe accommodations with Jacuzzi, a Continental champagne breakfast in bed one morning, long stemmed rose at turndown, gourmet chocolates upon arrival, a picnic lunch on one day, complimentary bicycle rentals for one day, a commemorative photograph and all taxes and gratuities. The Romantic Getaway, at $425, $369 or $299, gives you two nights of king-sized accommodations, full breakfast for two each morning, chilled champagne and fresh fruit basket on arrival and all taxes and gratuities.

Although there are other restaurants on the island, none has the charm and ambiance of those in the hotel. We recommend that you take either the Modified American Plan, at $54 per person per night, or the Full American Plan, at $72 per person per night. The latter allows you to take breakfast, lunch and dinner in the acclaimed and beautiful formal restaurant. The **Grand Dining Room**, elegantly restored in Victorian style and dominated by Ionic columns and gleaming white wood-

work, has three handsome fireplaces with intricately carved mantle pieces and marble surrounds. Add the gentle glow of candlelight, the soothing sound of piano accompaniment, glorious vistas of the lawns and river beyond, and the expectation of a gourmet meal, and you have a recipe for an unforgettably romantic evening. Also on-site are the **Café Solterra** bakery and delicatessen, the seasonal **Pool Bar and Grill** offering alfresco dining with full service bar, and the **Beach Pavilion** snack bar featuring frozen yogurt and beverages, and offering an outdoor shower, picnic tables, towel service and chair and umbrella rentals.

The Jekyll Island Club Hotel offers a host of complimentary recreational activities for your enjoyment. Take a dip in the near-Olympic sized pool surrounded by beautiful landscaping, try your luck at the putting green and tournament level croquet – where serious players wear white and you must sign up in advance – or lob a few over the volleyball net. Bicycles are available to rent from dawn to dusk, at $9 per half-day, $18 per day or $4 per hour; and, if all of this exercise stresses your body, arrangements can be made for a Swedish or other type of massage at $62.50 per hour.

In the **Riverview Lounge**, through French doors off the Grand Dining Room, Victorian Tea (or coffee) and all kinds of little goodies are served each afternoon between 4 and 5:30 pm at a cost of $4.95 per person. If you simply want to relax with a good book, then you are sure to find one in the lending library. Or, if the weather is poor, as it very rarely is, you can retreat to your room with a video rented from the front desk. To round out the facilities, the hotel offers complimentary intra-island van transportation and valet parking.

The **Beachview Club**, ☎ 912-635-2256 or 800-299-2228, 721 North Beachview Drive, is the newest hotel on the beach at Jekyll Island. Surrounded by a canopy of century-old oak trees and palms, it has 38 rooms and suites appointed to create a casual, but luxurious, beach ambiance reminiscent of Bermuda.

Each room has either one king-sized or two queen-sized beds, efficiency kitchen with microwave, toaster, coffeemaker and refrigerator, and a lovely ocean view. All Luxury Suites front on the ocean. Each, in addition to the expected amenities, has a private patio overlooking the seaside gardens for sunning or stargazing, an in-room hot tub with gas fireplace, a wet bar and efficiency kitchen. A limited number of larger suites have a full-sized kitchen and dinette for four. Communal amenities include a heated pool and 16-person hot tub. A nice bonus is that the hotel provides a complimentary shuttle to any restaurant on the island.

Rate schedules are based on four different seasons and several categories of accommodations. The most economical choice, a King Efficiency, rents for $89 to $189, depending on season; and the rate for the much more romantic Deluxe Luxury Suite ranges between $169 and $359. To make the most of your getaway dollars, opt for one of the following two packages. While they are both designed with honeymooners in mind, true romantic weekenders will realize that the honeymoon never really has to end. The Standard Honeymoon Package offers two nights accommodations, one dozen arranged roses, champagne or sparkling juice on ice, gourmet snack basket and one of four recreational activities, of which the choices include: two full-day bike rentals for each of you and a dolphin cruise; or, a one-hour private horse and buggy tour of the National Historic District; or, a one-hour beach trail ride for two at Driftwood Beach; or, a water taxi ride to St. Simons Island and a two-hour land tour. Prices range from a low of $399 in a Deluxe King Efficiency in spring or fall up to $789 for the Grand Luxury Suite in summer. The Deluxe Honeymoon Package includes all of the above, plus your choice of either a Dinner Cruise for two on the *Emerald Princess* cruise boat or a two-hour Private Sunset Cruise on the *Weadore,* a 31-ft. sloop. Prices range from $489 to $879.

Tables for Two

This chapter is different from most, as three of the four islands are relatively isolated, having few, if any, shops and restaurants. Also, some hotels we recommend supply all meals; and we strongly encourage readers to opt for the Full or Modified American Plan at The Jekyll Island Club Hotel. Even on St. Simons Island, where there is a fairly wide selection of restaurants, the one hotel we suggest has a very fine, and pleasant, restaurant of its own. In fact, the only hotel we recommend that doesn't have a restaurant is the Beachview Club on Jekyll Island. Readers electing to stay there, though, can avail themselves of the hotel's free shuttle service to and from the Grand Dining Room of the Jekyll Island Club Hotel, one of the most romantic restaurants you could ever find. Nevertheless, for those of a mind to dine out, we offer the following options, all on St. Simon's Island.

J Mac's Island Restaurant and Bistro, "In The Village," at 407 Mallory Street, ☎ 912-634-0403, fax 912-638-0814 or jmac@technonet.com jmac@technonet.com. This is open for dinner Monday through Saturday from 5:30 pm on and boasts St. Simons' "Finest Dining Experience." Seafood dominates the menu, but with a Southern flair. Of the appetizers, all in the $4.95 to $9.95 range, the Crispy Tempura Fried Grouper Strips and Baked Escargot and Brie are tempting. Entrées, in the $15.96 to $27.96 range, include such interesting combinations as Cajun Shrimp Over Cheese Grits, with ripe red tomatoes, scallions and tasso gravy, and Sautéed Crabcakes Over Spinach and Georgia Succotash, with sweet corn relish and mustard sauce. The wine list is comprehensive and wine tastings and dinners are held periodically. Reservations are recommended.

A bit more laid-back is **Frederica House**, 3611 Frederica Road, ☎ 912-638-6790, built of aged cedar and cypress wood and frequented by locals. The atmosphere is cozy, with seating both on the main floor and the balcony. Seafood and steaks predominate and the grilled seafood special is offered nightly. The

Combination Seafood Platter is a good bet at $15.95. Dinner is served between 5:30 and 9:30 pm, with early diners (5:30-6:30) receiving an early bird discount of $1 off each entrée. Reservations are accepted.

Also casual and featuring easy Southern-style dining is **Barbara Jean's**, 214 Mallory Street, ☎ 912-634-6500. The starters here are particularly enticing. Dirty Rice, a spicy combination of rice, peppers, onions, celery, sausage and chicken ($4.99) runs a close second to a house specialty, Chicken Fingers, served pecan-coated with a side of sweet and spicy sauce, fried with a side of honey mustard sauce, or buffalo-style with a side of blue cheese dressing ($4.99 each or $6.99 for a sampler platter). Also on offer are soups and a variety of salads, which can be topped with grilled, fried, pecan-coated or buffalo-style chicken or with grilled tuna, salmon or shrimp for an additional charge. And, although the seafood entrées look enticing, the management suggests, "If you don't try anything else, have the crab cakes!" These are made using all lump back fin crab meat (no fillers), come in 5 oz. or 7 oz. size, and are served singly, in pairs, or in a sandwich ($7.99-$18.99). Hours are 11 am to 10 pm daily.

Our Suggestion: Call ahead and order a pair of crab cake sandwiches for take-out. Can you imagine a more suitable beachside picnic or late night snack?

Shops, Spas, etc.

There is one place that most of you will pass on your way into, or out of, Brunswick & the Golden Isles of Georgia, that will appeal to most ladies and not a few men. After all, how many women can resist a manufacturers' outlet mall, especially the largest one in the whole of Georgia. And, if you find you have a rainy morning or afternoon on your hands, it is a perfect place to escape the weather. **Prime Outlets**, ☎ 912-437-2700, 888-545-7224, www.primeretail.com, formerly Magnolia Bluff Factory Shops, is just 10 minutes from Brunswick off I-95 at Exit

10 in Darien. Opened in 1995, and since expanded, it now has 80 name-brand outlet stores featuring an upscale mix of leading women's and men's designers, the hottest names in children's wear and toys and the main brand names in housewares and electronics, including the only Bose store in Georgia. All at attractive prices that can be reduced even more, provided you stop by the Customer Service Center in the Food Court for a free coupon book worth over $400 in discounts. Prime Outlets is open Monday through Saturday from 10 am to 9 pm and Sunday from 11 am to 6 pm, but closed Easter, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day.

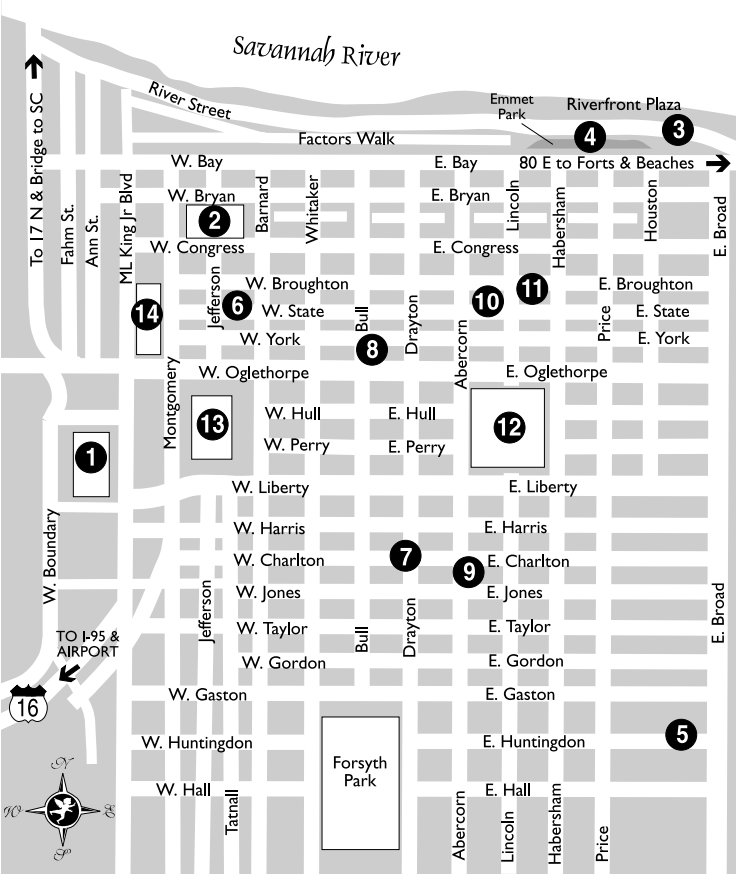
Savannah & Tybee Island

History

Savannah was founded upon the philanthropic ideals of British General and colonist James Oglethorpe. Born in London on December 22, 1696, son of a wealthy baronet, he was educated at Eton and Oxford, served in the war against the Turks in 1716-1717, and was praised for his services at the siege of Belgrade. Upon returning to England he was elected to Parliament at the tender age of 26.

A gentleman in every sense of the word, Oglethorpe had a sympathetic attitude toward those less fortunate than himself. He viewed the long-established practice of imprisoning English debtors to be one of his country's great injustices. A champion of the cause of religious freedom, he believed that oppressed members of dissenting religious sects should be afforded a place of refuge. Unable to effect change to the system, Oglethorpe determined to remove its victims. To that end, he suggested that a colony populated by the economically less fortunate and the religious non-conformists in Georgia would serve also as a buffer to separate the English settlers in the Carolinas from the Spanish settlers in Florida. His heartfelt and persuasive arguments won a charter for the Georgia Colony in 1732.

Savannah Historic District



1. Savannah Visitors Center, 1860
2. City Market
3. Ships of the Sea Museum
4. Waving Girl Statue
5. King-Tisdell Cottage
6. Telfair Mansion & Art Museum, 1800s
7. Green-Meldrim House, 1853
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9. Andrews House, 1849
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12. Colonial Park Cemetery
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On February 12, 1733, Oglethorpe, with more than 100 settlers, landed at the Yamacraw Bluff on the Savannah River to establish America's 13th, and final, colony. By the time he returned to England the next year, Georgia was attracting colonists of German Lutheran, Moravian and Scottish Presbyterian faiths. Oglethorpe returned to Georgia in late 1735. He brought with him the founders of the Methodist movement, brothers John and Charles Wesley who, subsequently, conducted preaching missions throughout the colonies.

In 1736 Oglethorpe oversaw the construction of Fort Frederica on St. Simons Island as a defense against the Spanish to the south. When war broke out between England and Spain three years later, he led an unsuccessful attack on St. Augustine and finally defeated the Spanish forces at the Battle of Bloody Marsh in 1742. Though Oglethorpe enjoyed general popularity, some colonists opposed his rules prohibiting drinking and slavery. One such adversary, a subordinate, charged him with mismanaging the expeditions to St. Augustine. In 1743, Oglethorpe was recalled to England to face court martial proceedings, and, while he was vindicated, he never returned to Georgia, remaining in England, where he continued his military career. James Edward Oglethorpe died at Cranham Hall in Essex, England, on June 30, 1785.

In 1744 the Port of Savannah was established, greatly augmenting the city's strategic importance. By the outbreak of the American Revolution a bustling commercial center had evolved, with ships coming and going from around the globe. Savannah was captured by the British in 1778 and thus held until the close of hostilities. With that peace came prosperity, as the city's port traffic increased steadily with the growth of the plantation-based economy of tobacco and cotton. It was a good time for Savannah.

In 1861, war came again to Savannah, this time in the form of the Civil War. Early on, Savannah was an important supply point for the Confederacy, but the fall of Fort Pulaski in 1862 closed the port to all sea traffic except for a few brave blockade-runners. The city itself fell to General Sherman's troops on De-

cember 22, 1864, prompting the General, based at the Green-Meldrim House, to send the following famous message: "To President Lincoln, I beg to present to you as a Christmas gift, the city of Savannah with 140 guns and plenty of ammunition and also about 25,000 bales of cotton."

Savannah Today

Today, Savannah, the oldest city in Georgia and just 18 miles from the Atlantic Ocean, is once again a leading port of the Southwestern United States. With its population of 150,000, it is the third-largest city in Georgia. As a center of historical interest, Savannah exceeds all other cities in Georgia and is one of the state's leading tourist attractions. It is also considered one of the most beautiful cities in the United States. The foresight of James Oglethorpe can be credited with much of what visitors see today. The old city, a marvel of early town planning, remains virtually as he conceptualized it some 260 years ago. In fact, in 1996 a 2½-square-mile area in downtown Savannah containing 2,358 buildings of architectural and/or historical interest was designated as a Registered National Landmark, making it one of the largest urban historic landmark districts in the nation. This is also the only city in the United States nominated to UNESCO's World Heritage List. Credit is due also to the **Historic Savannah Foundation**, ☎ 912-651-2125, 501 Whitaker Street, in Hodgson Hall, which since 1955 has been the catalyst for the restoration of Savannah's architectural heritage.

Savannah was voted "one of the top 10 US cities to visit" by *Condé Nast Traveler* and attracts over 5,000,000 visitors per year. It hosts numerous cultural events, the most important of which take place in the springtime. Be advised, however, that, during this period, accommodations are scarce. We'd recommend you book well in advance. Among the longstanding traditions is the St. Patrick's Day Parade, for over 175 years, second in size only to the one held in New York City. That event alone draws 300,000 to 500,000 celebrants. This is followed shortly

thereafter by the more sedate Savannah Tour of Homes and Gardens, which has been held for over 65 years.

Savannah's close proximity to the ocean gives rise to another local attraction, the beach resort of **Tybee Island**. Just 18 miles from downtown, this is well worth a visit for its attractions, both historical and recreational. Or, for the best of both worlds, stay at Tybee Island, visit the city and enjoy both.

Things to Do

The best place to begin your visit is the **Savannah Visitors Center**, ☎ 912-944-0460, 877 SAVANNAH, e-mail cvb@savga.com, www.savcvb.com, 301 Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. Housed in the restored Central of Georgia Railroad Station, it is open Monday to Friday, 8:30 am to 5 pm, and Saturday and Sunday from 9 am to 5 pm (closed on Christmas Day). In addition to the usual array of brochures, city maps and helpful attendants, you can also enjoy a short audio/visual presentation. The car park here is the point of origin for numerous tours of the city.

Without doubt, the main attraction in Savannah is the **Historic District** itself, with its unique layout. Indeed, the plan conceived by Oglethorpe is considered today, more than 250 years later, one of the world's best. Systematically, Oglethorpe laid out a series of 40 wards. The center of each was a square, with two lots on the east and west sides designated for important buildings. An additional 40 lots were on the north and south sides. Wards were separated from each other by wide boulevards, six running north to south and seven running east to west. Even Oglethorpe could not have realized that, with the advent of 21st-century traffic, these boulevards would become the main arteries serving to preserve the integrity and peacefulness of the public squares. Thus, visitors find today a city

unlike any other. Amidst the magnificent array of architecture – private homes, public buildings and churches, 21 of the original 24 squares have survived. Most bear the name of a prominent Revolutionary or Confederate hero and are adorned with monuments, statues or fountains. Streets, boulevards and squares alike are lined with majestic oak trees dressed in Spanish moss and accentuated by a display of gardenias, camellias, azaleas, palmettos and magnolias.

You may be surprised to learn that Spanish moss isn't moss at all. A member of the pineapple family, it is a flowering plant that blooms from April to July, has no roots, and lives only in humid areas where it absorbs water directly from the air.

There are so many places of historical and architectural significance that it is difficult to take everything in. We suggest that you take an organized tour to acquaint yourselves with Savannah. Following are just a few of the companies that will show and explain historic Savannah to you.

Tours on Tape, ☎ 912-944-0460, Savannah Visitors Center, or ☎ 912-232-0582, 313 Abercorn Street, offer two tapes for purchase at $12 each. The first narrates a driving tour of the Downtown Historic District; the second narrates A Drive in the Country.

For those contemplating driving around the city of Savannah, parking can be a real problem. Our suggestion: purchase, for just $5, a 48-hour Visitor Parking Pass, available at the Parking Services office, 100 East Bryan Street, the Bryan Street Garage, the Visitors Center or many of Savannah's hotels and inns. The pass allows free parking in the following: metered spaces with time limits of an hour or more; on Broughton

Street in time-regulated spaces; time-regulated spaces on River Street and on its ramps; city parking garages on State, Montgomery and Bryan Streets; the city lots at the Savannah Visitors Center and the Liberty and Montgomery lot.

Old Savannah Tours, ☎ 912-234-8128, 800-517-9007 or e-mail oldsavtour@aol.com, 250 Martin Luther King Boulevard, offers an unlimited on/off Historic Loop Tour of the entire Historic District by trolley. These depart from the Savannah Visitors Center between 9 am and 4:30 pm daily on a 20-25 minute schedule, allowing a full day of unlimited on/off boarding privileges at 13 convenient stops. The cost is just $20 per person and includes commentary by a licensed guide and admission to one house museum. Those intrigued by the novel *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*, the bestseller set in Savannah, will want to join up with either the 10 am or 2 pm Book Tour. For $17 per person, including entry to the Bonaventure Cemetery, this specialized tour takes you to all the locations in the city mentioned in that book.

If you are in the market for a personalized tour, **Ragtop Tours**, ☎ 912-944-0999, 19 East Perry Street, will show you the sights in style. The name should give a clue to the means of transport, nostalgically plush Kennedy-era Cadillac and Lincoln convertibles. For a reasonable $40 per couple (additional passengers may tag along at $10 each), you will be treated to a one-hour tour of Savannah that will be, in a word, unforgettable.

Equally unforgettable and epitomizing romance, are horse carriage tours. In Savannah these are operated by **Carriage Tours of Savannah**, ☎ 912-236-6756, and depart Monday through Saturday, between 9 am and 3 pm on the hour, from the City Market and Visitor's Center; between 6 and 9 pm on

the hour from the City Market and Hyatt Hotel; or, by reservation, from the Pirate's House Restaurant. The regular fare is $17 for adults. Surely, though, it is much more romantic to have a carriage to yourselves, and just $65 a couple buys you that privilege for an hour's private tour.

Our Suggestion: Bring a dozen roses and make alternate plans for inclement weather.

The best way to see and understand historic Savannah is at the street level, on foot, accompanied by a knowledgeable guide. If that is your preference, then the people to talk and walk with will be found at **The Savannah Walks Inc.**, ☎ 912-238-WALK (9255), 888-SAV-WALK or 800-729-3420, 123 East Congress Street, Reynold's Square. In the mornings, the choices are the Civil War Walk and the Savannah Stroll. The latter is repeated during the day, when other choices are the Churches & Graveyard Walk, A Walk Through "Midnight," the Southern Belles Walk or the Savannah Gates and Gardens walk. In the evenings you may take your choice of Ye Olde Pub Walk and the Lowcountry Ghosts Walk. Morning and daytime walks depart from Reynold's Square. Evening walks leave from Johnson Square. Fares are $13 for adults, with the exception of the Historic Homes Walk, which costs $19. If more than one tour takes your fancy, special discounts are available for multiple tours. Allow 1½ to two hours for most walks and, if the skies are threatening, bring an umbrella; tours take place rain or shine, although they may be cancelled in extreme weather. The schedule may vary slightly during the winter and holiday seasons. To ensure the highest standards of quality, the size of each group is limited and reservations are required.

It would be pedantic of us not to inform you of the most unusual method of getting around Savannah. And, if we haven't already given clue enough, the name of the company, **Savannah Pedicab**, ☎ 912-232-7900, 200 West Congress Street, gives the

game away. So, sit back, relax and allow yourselves to be pedaled around town in a tricycle-powered rickshaw. Rates are $20 for a half-hour and $40 for an hour; a full day will cost you $100; or you can pay by the ride.

A very healthy alternative, namely cycling, is a good way to avoid an almost continuous hunt for a parking place. Bicycles are available for rent from **Savannah Bicycle Rentals**, ☎ 912-447-0800, 200 West Congress Street, in the City Market parking garage. They are open seven days a week from 10 am to 6 pm, and the prices are reasonable indeed: $6 an hour, $10 a half-day, or $20 a day. What's more, with advance reservations, Savannah Bicycle Rentals will save you time and hassle with a drop-off/pick-up service.

Armed with knowledge and preferences from your tour, you will probably want to explore some of the buildings further on your own. The more important ones are described below.

The **Savannah History Museum**, ☎ 912-238-1779 or fax 651-6827, 303 Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, is a large museum housed in what was the passenger station of the Central Georgia Railway. Here, the history of Savannah and eastern Georgia unfold through a mixture of multimedia presentations, animated dioramas and traditional exhibits. Among these are: a theater that focuses on Savannah's early history, another theater that plays out a local 1779 battle of the American Revolution, a model of the *SS Savannah* (the first steamship to cross the Atlantic – from Savannah to Liverpool in 1819), an 1890 locomotive, an extensive collection of military uniforms, a cotton gin, one of Johnny Mercer's Oscars, and (of course) Forrest Gump's famous bench.

If you've seen the movie, you will remember Forrest sitting on a bench in Chippewa Square in front of the General Oglethorpe Monument. While the bench was a product of poetic license – nothing more than a movie prop – many residents wanted to place a bench in the square permanently. Purists, favoring historical authenticity, shuddered at the idea. A compromise was reached in June 1995, when the bench found a home in the Savannah History Museum, along with Gump's suitcase and box

of chocolates – all a gift to Savannah from Paramount Pictures Corporation. Visit the museum daily from 9 am to 5 pm.

The **Telfair Mansion & Art Museum**, ☎ 912-232-1177, 121 Barnard Street, is an 1818 Regency-style mansion designed and built by English architect William Jay upon a site where the Government House once stood, home to Georgia's royal governors. The house is furnished with fine antiques and period pieces, many of which once belonged to Governor Edward Telfair, and its Octagon Room is said to be the finest of its genre in the United States. Also the oldest art museum in the Southeast, the museum wing displays a permanent collection of art dating from the 18th century through the present. Most notable are collections of important American and European paintings and sculptures, prints, silver, fine furniture and decorative arts. This home, too, has a *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* connection. Sylvia Shaw Judson's statue of the Bird Girl was made famous by the cover of the novel. Opening hours are Monday, midday to 5 pm, and Tuesday through Saturday, 10 am to 5 pm.

The **Ships of the Sea Maritime Museum**, ☎ 912-232-1511, 41 Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, is also housed in a mansion. This one, completed in 1819, was built for merchant William Scarborough, a principal investor in the *SS Savannah*. For nearly a century, from 1878 to 1972, it housed a public school that enrolled exclusively children of African descent. In 1974, it was designated a Historic Landmark, and its restoration was undertaken in 1976 as a Bicentennial project. The building remains one of the Historic District's most interesting attractions and today plays host to collections of early navigational equipment, model ships, ships' figureheads, a number of exhibits that interpret Savannah's seagoing history, all sorts of interesting artifacts and memorabilia, and a shipwright's carpenter shop. Look for the collection of ships in bottles, which are exquisitely made, rare, and easily equal in value to their life-sized counterparts. Visit Tuesday through Sunday, 10 am to 5 pm.

The **Owens-Thomas House**, ☎ 912-233-9743, 124 Abercorn Street, designed and built between 1816 and 1819 by William

Jay, is an elegant Regency-style villa considered one of the finest examples of this type of architecture in the US. His client for this project was cotton merchant and banker, Richard Richardson. History lovers will want to know that it was from this house in 1825 that the Marquis de Lafayette gave a speech to the citizens of Savannah. Presently, the old house is furnished with rare antiques, complemented by a fine collection of European and Chinese porcelains and numerous artifacts of historical significance. Beyond the main house and across the expanse of exquisite, formal landscaped gardens, is the carriage house. Guided tours are conducted on Monday from midday to 5 pm, Tuesday to Saturday from 10 am to 5 pm, and Sunday from 2 to 5 pm. The last tour departs at 4:25 pm.

The **Andrew Low House**, ☎ 912-233-6854, 329 Abercorn Street, was built in 1848 under the direction of the wealthy Savannah merchant whose name it bears. This stuccoed brick house is most noted for its carved woodwork, fine plaster cornices, and crystal chandeliers. Cookie lovers will be interested to learn that Juliette Gordon Low, founder of the Girl Scout movement in 1912, made her home here. Among the famous guests who spent time in the old house were General Robert E. Lee and novelist William Makepeace Thackeray. It is literally jam-packed with fine examples of 19th-century furniture and memorabilia. The house is open each Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday between 10:30 am and 3:30 pm, and on Sunday from noon to 3:30 pm. Guided tours depart at half-hour intervals.

The **Davenport House**, ☎ 912-236-8097, built in 1815-1820 by Isaiah Davenport, is among the finest examples of Federal architecture in Savannah. It was saved from demolition, following its condemnation in 1950, by the faithful efforts of the Historic Savannah Foundation. The old building, famous for delicate plaster work, fine wrought iron, and an unusual elliptical stairway, was restored, decorated as it might have been during the early 19th century, and furnished with English and American pieces of the period. Opening hours are Monday to Saturday from 10 am to 4 pm and Sunday from 1 to 4 pm. Again, tours depart at half-hour intervals.

The **Green-Meldrim House**, ☎ 912-233-3845, 14 West Macon Street, was designed by John Norris of New York in the early 1850s for his client Charles Greene. It stands today as an example of the Gothic Revival architecture typical of the South prior to the Civil War. It had the rather dubious honor of serving as headquarters for General Sherman during his troops' occupation of Savannah in 1864. Though today it functions as the Parish House of St. John's Church, you can take a tour on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday between the hours of 10 am and 4 pm or Saturday between 10 am and 1 pm.

The **Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace**, ☎ 912-233-4501 or fax 233-4659, 142 Bull Street, built between 1818 and 1821, was also a home of Girl Scout founder, Juliette Gordon Low. She was born here on Halloween night of 1860 and died here on January 17, 1927. The home has been restored and refurnished with period furniture (many of which are Low family pieces) to appear as it would have in 1886, the year of Juliette's marriage. Look for the lovely Victorian garden with original outbuildings. The house and grounds presently serve as a national center for the Girl Scouts of America. Visit Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday between 10 am and 4 pm, or Sunday from 12:30 to 4:30 pm.

The **King-Tisdale Cottage**, ☎ 912-234-8000, 502 East Harris Street, named for Eugene and Sarah King, and Mrs. King's second husband, Robert Tisdale, is a circa 1896 Victorian cottage which has been restored to its original condition. Here you will find Savannah's premier Black heritage museum with interesting artifacts, memorabilia and exhibits. Before leaving, be sure to sign up for the Negro Heritage Trail Tour, which takes in 17 sites that figured prominently in Savannah's Black history and departs from the Visitors Center on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. The museum is open Tuesday to Saturday from midday to 5 pm.

Wandering around Savannah you will have discovered that many of the most interesting properties in the city are privately owned and, tantalizingly, only their silhouettes are visible for viewing. With the exception, that is, of one weekend at the end of March each year during the annual **Savannah**

Tour of Homes and Gardens, ☎ 912-234-8054 or fax 234-2123, 18 Abercorn Street. This tour has been held for over 65 years. Self-guided walking tours continue throughout the day and in the twilight hours. A complimentary slide preview provides an introduction to each tour, which takes in six to eight sights of varying age and size. In addition, there are a number of other tours, receptions, church services, concerts, teas and even riverboat cruises.

Each home tour is priced individually and tickets often sell out, so order yours early. Another complication, mentioned earlier, is accommodations. To avoid disappointment you must book many months in advance.

In a similar vein, toward the end of April, the Garden Club of Savannah presents an annual **N.O.G.S. Tour of Hidden Gardens**, ☎ 912-238-0248, PO Box 13892, Savannah, GA 31416. In 1999, a $20 ticket allowed access to eight walled gardens and the award-winning Massie School Garden and offered an invitation to a Simply Southern Tea at the Telfair Museum of Art. The year 2000 marks this tour's 25th anniversary.

As might be expected given its spiritual beginnings, there are numerous churches of many different denominations in Savannah. Most, though, are not open to tourists, so they can be admired only from the outside. The more important of these are listed below. The **Cathedral of St. John the Baptist**, ☎ 912-233-4709, is found at Lafayette Square, 222 East Harris Street. Its congregation was first organized in the late 1770s, making it the oldest Roman Catholic Church in Georgia. The present structure, which replaced earlier ones, was dedicated in 1876. The **First African Baptist Church**, ☎ 912-233-6597, Franklin Square, 23 Montgomery Street, was founded in 1773. It lays claim to being the oldest continuously active, autonomously developed African-American church on the continent of North America. **Congregation Temple Mickve Israel**, ☎ 912-233-1547, Monterey Square, 20 East Gordon Street, was organized in July 1733, just five months after Oglethorpe's colonization of Georgia. It is, thus, the oldest in the South and the

third-oldest Jewish congregation in the nation. It is also the only Gothic Revival synagogue in America, built in 1878, and home to the country's oldest Torah. The adjoining museum, open to the public, boasts more than 1,790 historical books of congregational activities and letters from Presidents Washington, Jefferson and Madison.

Outdoor lovers will find much to please in Savannah. **Forsyth Park**, laid out in 1851, is among Savannah's most picturesque parks, especially in springtime when the azaleas are in bloom. The grounds are spread over 20 acres at the southern end of the Historic District between Whitaker and Drayton. If you are in need of a respite from walking, you can relax here and enjoy the tranquility. On the other hand, if you are feeling particularly energetic, a one-mile jogging course awaits your attention. A lovely old fountain, circa 1858 and similar to the one in the Place de la Concorde in Paris, is the park's signature piece. Other highlights include the Confederate Monument in the extension to the south and a Fragrant Garden for the blind.

The **Colonial Park Cemetery** lies between Habersham and Abercorn Streets, with its northern boundary running along Oglethorpe. From 1750 to 1853 this served as a public burial ground, and is the last resting place for many of Georgia's early citizens. Among the more famous is Button Gwinnett, a signatory to the Declaration of Independence.

The **Trustees Garden Site**, south of Bay Street on East Broad Street, is the original location of a 10-acre experimental garden constructed in 1733 by the colonists and modeled after the Chelsea Botanical Gardens in London. Though myriad cuttings were collected from around the world and much faith was invested in the wine industry and in mulberry trees (essential for silk), unsuitable climatic conditions and soil led to the failure of both. Happily, though, the peach trees and upland cotton that were planted would become major crops for both Georgia and South Carolina. The **Herb House**, now incorporated within the Pirates' House restaurant and shop complex, was built in 1734 as a residence for the gardener of Trustees' Garden. It is considered to be the oldest house in the state of Georgia.

The **City Market**, to the east of Franklin Square and just two blocks from River Street, has long been the commercial and social hub of Savannah. A survivor of numerous calamities over the centuries, including the threat of demolition, this recently restored four-block area includes interesting shops, stores, art galleries, studios, restaurants, taverns and even live entertainment. It is easy to find, easy to shop, and well worth a little time. Who knows what unusual little goodies you'll find?

Factors Walk stretches along a river bluff on Bay Street between Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Emmet Park. The name derives from merchants who conducted a trade in cotton and other commodities on this street during the 19th century. Many of their offices have been converted to inns, restaurants and specialty stores, accessed off the main street by way of attractive pedestrian walkways or small parks.

Those unfamiliar with the area might be deceived by the optical illusion that nothing exists between Bay Street and the river, but something certainly does. A series of steep ramps, paved with cobblestones transported as ballast on ships returning empty-handed from England, lead down to River Street and what, at one time, were warehouses. From Savannah's early days until the demise of its shipping eminence following an epidemic of yellow fever in the early 1800s, **River Street** was the hub for the city's maritime trade, a hive of almost continuous activity. Over the next century, however, the fortunes of the riverfront declined in concert with the river trade until only a host of abandoned warehouses stood sentinel over the waterway. Finally, in the mid-1970s, revitalization came to River Street under the banner of the River Street Urban Renewal Project. Investments of $7,000,000-plus transformed the many abandoned structures into a colorful mix of restaurants, shops and businesses. Today, this once dilapidated area hosts numerous festivals and special events, details of which can be obtained from the **Savannah Waterfront Association**, ☎ 912-234-0295. In sum, by day or by night, this is now arguably the most popular tourist area in Savannah.

No visit to Savannah would be complete without some investigation of the **Savannah River**, the city's lifeblood. To our

minds, a most enticing option is a cruise upon either the 325-passenger *Savannah River Queen* or its larger and newer sister, the 600-passenger *Georgia Queen*. Both ships are owned and operated by the River Street Riverboat Company, ☎ 9120 232-6404, 800-786-6404, fax 234-7881, e-mail sales@savannah-riverboat.com, www.savannah-riverboat.com, 9 East River Street. There are a variety of cruises from which to choose. Throughout the year, on alternate days and times according to the season and with no reservations required, there is a one-hour Narrated Sightseeing Tour for a fare of $13.95 per person. During the months March to October, sailing at noon, you can take a 1½-hour Saturday Luncheon Cruise ($22.95) or a Sunday Brunch Cruise ($24.95). Each is narrated and requires a prepaid reservation. Other cruises that might appeal are the Monday Gospel Dinner Cruise, the Moonlight Entertainment Cruise and the Murder Afloat Cruise. Romantic weekenders will find special delight on the two-hour Dinner Entertainment Cruise. Sailing year-round at 7 pm, this includes a buffet dinner, offers live entertainment for both listening and dancing, and costs $34.95 per person. Prepaid reservations are required.

Other visitors will view the river from a different angle, and Savannah is certainly not short of opportunities for fishing if you are so inclined. Greg Davis and his wife Holly Dixon Davis, both USCG-licensed Captains, run the **Savannah Light Tackle Fishing Company**, ☎ 912-355-3271, fax 352-0419, www.sltfishing.qpg.com, PO Box 3666, Savannah, GA 31414. You can choose from a number of packages, with prices quoted here, of course, being for two. Inshore fishing packages include a half-day (four hours) at $175, full day (six-eight hours) at $300 or redfish tide (two-three hours) at $150. Offshore Fishing packages include Gulfstream fishing (12-14 hours) at $1,200 or live bait king mackerel (six hours) at $600. Be advised, however, if you elect to go Gulfstream fishing (a 70-mile trip) that the ride can get rather rough. You may prefer one of their interesting excursions; perhaps, a trip through georgia's barrier islands or a sunrise or sunset dolphin cruise. Prices

range from $150 to $400, and, according to their duration, include snacks, lunch and drinks.

Savannah's first and only fly-fishing shop, **Oak Bluff Outfitters**, ☎ 912-691-1115, fax 691-1117, e-mail oakbluff@worldnet.att.net, www.oakbluff.com, is a few minutes from downtown at 4501 Habersham Street. They specialize in guided fishing and nature trips. Fly-casting and -tying lessons, scheduled upon request, as well as group classes, are held at the shop. They carry a particularly eclectic array of goods. In addition to a wide range of fly-fishing tackle (which you would expect), there are clothes – notably quality goods from Orvis, Filson and Barbour. There is even a special corner for the ladies. You can also be sure that something will take your fancy from among the selections of decoys, Battenkill luggage, sunglasses, picture frames, watches, books, etc. And, if you are dog lovers, check out the luxury dog beds and other canine accessories.

Tybee Island

Time, now, to head out onto US Route 80 and toward Tybee Island. Along the way, however, a stop at **Fort Pulaski**, ☎ 912-786-5787, is certainly in order. Constructed at the mouth of the Savannah River, the structure is comprised of 25,000,000 bricks, boasts walls 7.5 feet thick and, when it was completed in 1847, was considered the ultimate defense fortification of its era. Fifteen years later, a siege by Federal troops during the Civil War put its strength to the test. Sadly, it failed. Artillery bombardment, launched over a period of 30 hours from Tybee Island more than a mile away, ultimately breached the walls. This marked the first time such an attack had successfully penetrated a masonry fortification, thus beginning a change in military defensive strategies that would echo around the world. These days, the remarkably well preserved fort is open to the public, daily, from 9 am to 5:15 pm. Audio stations within the fort offer brief historical explanations and Park Rangers are on hand to answer questions. At the Visitor Center, which opens from 8:30 am to 5 pm, there is an introductory video, exhibits and a bookstore. Aside from the historical interest, visi-

tors will enjoy the views over the Atlantic Ocean and the salt marshes that cover much of the park's 5,600 acres.

Moving on to Tybee Island, you will discover another chapter of fascinating history. At one time or another the island was governed by Spanish, French or Confederate forces and even pirates. It was the native Euchee Indians, however, who gave it a name, Tybee meaning "salt" in their tongue. It was James Oglethorpe who foresaw the island's potential for a lucrative shipping trade very early on. Knowing of the treacherous shoals along the Savannah River, he established the first **Tybee Light**, in effect just a small beacon, in 1734. Presently it stands 154 feet tall, with the lower 60 feet dating from 1773 and the upper 94 feet being built in 1867. Interestingly, the walls taper from a base that is 12 feet thick to a very thin 18 inches at the summit. In 1985 it was officially opened to the public, and daily supervised tours wind up the 178 steps to the observation deck, 145 feet above the ground. The original Fresnel lens, nearly eight feet tall, magnifies the 30,000 candlepower light to such intensity that it is visible 18 miles out at sea! The lighthouse, like the Tybee Island Museum just across the road, is operated by the **Tybee Island Historical Society**, ☎ 912-786-5801, 30 Medding Drive. The **Tybee Island Museum**, on the site of Fort Scraven, is housed in one of the old coastal batteries, built in 1898, and features exhibits that trace the history of the island. Both the museum and lighthouse are open in the summer, April through Labor Day, daily, except Tuesday, from 10 am to 6 pm. The rest of the year, visit on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday from midday to 4 pm and on Saturday and Sunday from 10 am to 4 pm.

Since the late 19th century, Tybee Island has become a popular retreat for Savannah residents. As early as 1889, a train ran from Savannah to Tybee, and, in the early part of the 20th century, the Central of Georgia Railroad carried as many as 5,000 passengers daily on the one-hour ride for daily or weekend excursions. But progress encroached and the June 1923 opening of the first road running parallel to the tracks sounded the death knell for train services. They ceased just 10 years later. Nevertheless, the legacy has not been entirely lost. The tracks

have been converted into a well-used bike path, Rails to Trails, and Tybee Island, still a popular destination, hosts many celebrations. Perhaps the favorite is July 4th, with its huge fireworks show.

It goes without saying that many professional fishing guides work the island. We would recommend **Tybee Island Charters, Inc.**, ☎ 912-786-4801, owned and operated by USCG-licensed Captains Cecil and Elizabeth Johnson. Their deep sea fishing expeditions sail from the Tybee Island Fisherman's Co-Op at Lazaretto Creek in search of amberjack, barracuda, king and Spanish mackerel, sea bass, shark or triggerfish, with four- , six- or eight-hour adventures costing $300, $400 and $500, respectively. If are looking to reel in dolphin, grouper, snapper and wahoo, an 11-hour trip will cost $600. For the really big catch – marlin, sailfish and tuna – book either a 13-hour or a 15-hour trip into the Gulf Stream, with the prices being $800 and $1,000, respectively. Closer to shore, you can enjoy a spot of inshore fishing, for catch bass (redfish), flounder, shark, sheepshead, tarpon or whiting. A four-hour trip costs $200 and a six-hour trip is priced at $300. All of Island Charters' prices are quoted for two people or, if you don't mind sharing the space, the deep-sea trips accommodate up six people. Rates include bait, tackle, ice and taxes, but exclude the mates' tip and food and drink for your own consumption.

Finally, if fishing just isn't your thing, the Captains Johnson also guide a sightseeing cruise. And dolphin watches, bird watching tours, sharks teeth and fossil digs, Savannah River and Intracoastal Waterway tours, Hilton Head and Daufuskie Island tours and Island Hopping tours can all be arranged. For each, the fee per couple is $60 per hour, with a two-hour minimum.

Kayaking is a bit more novel way to see the river. **Sea Kayak Georgia**, ☎ 912-786-8732, 888-KAYAK GA (529-2542), e-mail SeaKayaakGA@aol.com, or www.seakayakgeorgia.com, is run by Dale Williams. It offers a variety of local half-day, day-long and overnight trips. Also available are trips farther afield, along the Georgia Coast, in Florida, through the Okefenokee Swamp, in Coastal Maine and even in Scotland and the British

Isles. For newcomers to the sport, there are many instructional courses throughout the year. All instructors are certified by the American Canoe Association, the British Canoe Association, or both, with many having also worked as professional interpretive naturalists.

For a close and personal encounter with any number of aquatic friends, we encourage you to pay a visit to the **Tybee Island Marine Science Center**, ☎ 912-786-5917, 1510 Strand. Here, you can walk hand-in-hand right off of the beach to view eight aquariums, a touch tank containing specimens indigenous to the coast of Georgia, and a variety of exhibits. Summer hours are Monday to Saturday from 9 am to 4 pm and Sunday, 1 to 4 pm. Winter hours, admittedly not friendly to romantic weekenders, are Monday to Friday from 9 am to 2 pm.

Tybee Island has another attraction, and one that may well surprise, as it is seemingly incongruous with the other conservative laws in the state of Georgia. For instance, you can't buy a beer, except in a restaurant, on a Sunday. Still, if you are 21 years or older, you can set sail on the ***Atlantic Star***, ☎ 912-786-STAR (7827), from the Lazaretto Creek Marina and indulge in the thrills of casino gambling. The 90-foot vessel, with a crew of 12 and carrying a maximum of 88 passengers, sets sail on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday at 7 pm and on Saturday and Sunday at 1 pm for four-hour cruises. The cost of $9.95 each per person includes an open buffet of snack foods, access to a full bar on board, and three hours of gambling time. Hopefully, lady luck will tap your shoulder as you try your hand at one of three blackjack tables (with minimums/maximums of $5 to $100, $10 to $200 and $25 to $500, respectively); shoot craps (with $5 to $300 double odds); or take on the one-armed bandit of any of 21 slot machines (playing at 25¢ to $1). Reservations are a necessity and, at least in this regard, it is best not to push your luck – book several days prior to sailing.

Maritime matters aside and pressing on to new heights, a hot air balloon adventure may be just the ticket to get your romantic weekend off to a flying start. Andy and Teresa Cayton of **Feather Air of Savannah**, ☎ 912-858-2529, 4326 Wilma Ed-

wards Road, Black Creek (midway between Savannah and Statesboro) make 45-minute to one-hour flights every Friday, Saturday and Sunday, weather conditions allowing (meaning winds 10 mph or less). Flights, best taken just after sunrise or two hours before sunset, glide peacefully for five to seven miles over the most interesting countryside at an elevation of no more than 1,000 feet, unless otherwise requested. You will be treated, also, to a post-flight champagne reception, and receive a certificate to commemorate your trip and to verify your bravery. Be sure to make reservations well in advance.

Sweet Dreams

Savannah

The **Granite Steps**, ☎ 912-233-5380 or fax 236-3116, 126 East Gaston Street, among the newcomers to town, also happens to be one the smallest and most luxurious. It will come as no surprise, therefore, to learn that the innkeeper, Donna Sparks, has a pedigree in hospitality. Her parents are the proprietors of northern Georgia's famed Château Élan. The Granite Steps, circa 1881, is located in the Historic District, just a couple of blocks from wonderful Forsyth Park and a 10-minute stroll from River Street.

In the mid-1980s the home was purchased by Jim Williams, who began a restoration process that was prematurely halted by his untimely death. That did not, though, preclude the house from being chosen as a backdrop for a pair of scenes in the motion picture *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*. Following Donna's acquisition of the property and prior to its opening as a bed and breakfast in May of 1998, it was fully restored, renovated, and redecorated, combining old-world elegance and absolutely modern facilities. Original hardwood and marble floors, 14-foot ceilings and marble mantles are found throughout the house. Public areas consist of a gracious double parlor, a cheery sunroom, a dining room, a library, and a beautifully landscaped courtyard. The five guest rooms each feature a working fireplace and are outfitted in an eclectic mix of his-

toric local furniture, antiques and contemporary accent pieces. Two have a queen-sized bed, a balcony patio and a large shower, and one has a whirlpool tub. The other three are suites, each comprised of a sitting room, a bedroom with king-sized bed, and a marble bathroom – complete with fireplace, large walk-in shower and whirlpool tub. You may even find the luxury of a TV perched on the side of the tub. Each morning, guests have a choice between a hot gourmet breakfast and a lighter, Continental-style meal that may be taken in either the dining room or the sunroom – or in your room on a silver tray.

Such elegant surroundings are only a part of the attraction of staying at the Granite Steps, however. Donna Sparks' philosophy, which is carried out in practice, is to offer "the highest quality of service in a manner that is warm and friendly and distinctly Southern." She adopts the traditional, if decreasingly prevalent, B&B hands-on approach, actually doing the cooking, entertaining, and even the nightly turndown service personally. As you might expect, the rates are not inexpensive, $250 a night for a queen-sized room and $350 for a suite. Still, we believe you will agree that, for your very special romantic weekend, this is a small price to pay for the level of excellence.

The **Magnolia Place Inn**, ☎ 912-236-7674, 800-238-7674, fax 236-1145, e-mail b.b.magnolia@mci2000.com and www.magnoliaplaceinn.com, 503 Whitaker Street, is housed within an 1878 Steamboat Gothic house with sweeping verandas overlooking verdant Forsyth Park. In the main house are 13 guest rooms, each with private bath. Six have a double Jacuzzi tub, and 11 have working fireplaces. In an adjoining property there are two suites, each with working fireplace and one with a jumbo Jacuzzi tub. Each room or suite has either a queen-sized or king-sized four-poster bed, and combination TV/VCR with remote control and an extensive video collection. The rooms are named in honor of men who figured prominently in the shaping of Savannah's destiny and rent for between $135 and $250 a night, according to location, size and facilities. These and the public rooms are sumptuously decorated with English antiques, oriental porcelains and prints and, as an extra touch, a magnificent British butterfly collection. An inter-

esting feature in older houses in Savannah, and one that is especially prominent in the Magnolia Place, is the apparent scarcity of doors. This is a bit of an optical illusion, devised as a shrewd way to circumvent an unusual taxation policy based upon a house's street-fronting footage. Cleverly, the rooms are accessed from "side street" verandas, by way of huge windows that, effectively, act as doors.

A Continental breakfast is served, at your preference and weather permitting, either in the parlor, on the veranda, in the garden, or upon a silver tray in your room. Wine and tea are available in the afternoon, and cordials and pralines are delivered with the turndown service.

The **Hamilton Turner Inn**, ☎ 912-233-1833, 888-448-8849, www.hamilton-turnerinn.com, 330 Abercorn Street, is located in Lafayette Square in the heart of the Historic District. Originally built for a wealthy jeweler, Samuel P. Hamilton, in 1873, it is among the finest examples of Second Empire French architecture in the United States and was one of the first homes in Savannah to have electricity. Literature lovers will be intrigued to know that this home was subsequently owned by Nancy Hillis (the character Mandy in the book *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*). Most recently, in 1997, Charles and Sue Strickland, native Savannahians, acquired the property. During 1998, they authentically restored the home, added modern facilities, furnished the interior with Empire, Eastlake and Renaissance Revival antiques, and opened its doors to the public. Their diligent efforts yielded 14 luxury guest rooms and suites each with private bath, telephone with on-line hookups, television with HBO, and VCR with well-stocked video library. There are whirlpools, fireplaces and balconies overlooking the square in some rooms. Rates vary from $160 to $260 a night. You can also expect a full Southern breakfast and complimentary afternoon tea.

The **Ballastone Inn**, ☎ 912-236-1484, 800-822-4553, fax 236-4626, 14 East Oglethorpe Avenue, is named after the legendary stones that were used as a foundation for much of Savannah. It is a four-story mansion in the center of the Historic District. Constructed in 1838, it was originally designed for use as a private residence, but has since worn many hats. Going from boarding house to bawdy house, it finally served as a dormitory for its next door neighbor, the Juliette Gordon Low Girl Scout National Center, before undergoing restoration to its original antebellum glory in 1980. The result is a charming 17-room inn, which has since been awarded AAA Four-Diamond and Mobil Four-Star recognition. Rooms are classified as Standard at $195 to $225, Superior at $255 to $285, or Suite at $315 to $345. Be advised, however, that during the busy spring months of March, April and May and in October, a $60 supplement is levied on each room/suite. All are beautifully appointed, each one unique, with antiques and period reproductions. Each has a private bath, with superior terry robes and slippers, scales and hairdryers and Caswell-Massey toiletries. Most have fireplace, king-sized bed and sitting area, and some offer whirlpool tub and balcony.

The magnificent public areas include the parlor, very inviting for morning and afternoon reading; the lounge, with an antique bar for evening socializing; the tea room, where breakfast, lunch and afternoon tea are served; and the lush courtyard, which is simply ideal for relaxing. And, the service is exemplary. Complimentary clothes pressing is offered; bicycles and tennis equipment are provided; the use of nearby health club facilities is gratis; and the concierge is available 24 hours a day to arrange tours, restaurant reservations, or, perhaps, a massage to relax your weary limbs.

The **President's Quarters**, ☎ 912-233-1600, 888-592-1812, fax 238-0849, e-mail info@presidentsquarters.com, www.presidentsquarters.com, 225 East President Street, is conveniently located just three blocks from River Street. These twin 1855 Federal-style townhouses, which once stood on their own block, were originally owned by Andrew Gordon Low of the family of Juliette Gordon Low, founder of the American Girl

Scouts. In 1987, the properties were creatively transformed into a sophisticated inn comprised of 19 rooms and suites, each named after a US President that has visited Savannah. The interior is finished out in a delightfully eclectic fashion. There are four-poster, canopy and old-fashioned high beds. Guest rooms have any combination of such amenities as a fireplace, a balcony, ceiling fans, refrigerator, television with VCR and cable cleverly concealed within an armoire, a writing desk, and telephone with data port. Each has a private bath, seven have a Jacuzzi tub. There is also a pair of fluffy monogrammed terry cloth robes for lounging. An elevator offers ease of access and some rooms are handicapped-accessible.

A complimentary chilled bottle of wine and fruit await you in your room of choice, where a Continental breakfast will be delivered each morning. The deluxe afternoon tea – with cakes, salads, cheeses and wine – is highly popular, and sweets and cordials are placed upon your pillow during the nightly turndown service. Conveniently, there is a private parking space, and a concierge service is available 24 hours a day. Rates range between $137 and $225 per night.

Romantic weekenders would do well to consider the Special Package. This includes champagne served with a gourmet snack of fresh fruit and either a cheese tray or a caviar pie; a private Savannah Carriage Tour for two; a $50 dinner certificate; a red rose spray upon the pillow at evening turndown service and an evening's stay in one of the Presidential Suites. The cost is $369 a night. Additional nights, without the extras, are discounted to $167.

The **Foley House Inn**, ☎ 912-232-6622, 800-647-3708, fax 231-1218, e-mail foleyinn@aol.com and www.foleyinn.com, 14 West Hull Street, is found on Chippewa Square – the site where scenes of *Forrest Gump* were filmed. The house, dating from 1896, was fully restored in 1982 by Inge Svensson Moore,

who was born in Denmark, and her husband, Mark, who was formerly a broker in New York City. Recapturing the home's original splendor, the décor is appropriately accented with furniture, silver, china, oriental rugs and hand-colored engravings, which have been carefully selected from around the world. Careful attention is given to the smallest of details.

The 19 guest rooms – with a mixture of king-sized, queen-sized and double beds – delicately blend traditional décor and modern amenities. Five rooms boast an oversized Jacuzzi tub and most have a gas fireplace. The tariff is $165 to $275 per night, and includes a complimentary breakfast – served in the parlor, enclosed courtyard or in the privacy of your room, as well as afternoon tea and goodies.

The **Gaston Gallery Bed & Breakfast**, ☎ 912-238-3294, 800-671-0716, www.gastongallery.com, 211 East Gaston Street, is in a charming 19th-century Italianate townhouse in Savannah's Historic District. An interesting collection of guest roomsoffers a variety of accommodations, each with private bath – although, in some cases, access may be outside of the room. The décor of each is unique. Sleeping quarters range from twin-bed to king-sized canopy bed rooms, and antiques abound alongside such modern amenities as remote control cable TV. Some rooms feature a balcony and others are handicapped-accessible for those with special needs. Also look for a complimentary Continental-Plus breakfast, wine and cheese each evening, and off-street parking behind the house. Prices are in the $90 to $225 range and a two-night minimum stay is required.

The **Hilton Savannah DeSoto**, ☎ 912-232-9000, 800-426-8483, fax 231-1633, www.Savannahdesoto, in the center of the Historic District at 15 East Liberty Street, is named in honor of Hernando DeSoto, the first European recorded to have seen the Savannah River. Set upon a site that once housed the original barracks of the US Army, the 1890s structure was com-

pletely rebuilt in 1966. Today's guests choose from among 246 tastefully decorated guest rooms, and three suites. Many have a private balcony, some are handicapped-accessible, and non-smoking rooms are available upon request. Each is equipped with coffeemaker, hairdryer, dual phone lines, data ports and remote control TV. As rates vary considerably, according to season and other considerations, it is wise to call well in advance of your special weekend to inquire as to the most favorable rates and special promotions. Ask, especially, about rooms on the Concierge Level.

Communal amenities include an outdoor heated rooftop pool; complimentary use of the Downtown Athletic Club, which is within walking distance of the hotel; the on-site Magnolia Restaurant, featuring Lowcountry Savannah cuisine and, in the lobby, the Lion's Den bar, which offers happy hour specials between 5 and 7 pm on weeknights.

Tybee Island

The **Marsh Hen B&B**, ☎ 912-786-0378, 888-786-0378 and www.tybeeisland.com/marshhen.htm, at 702 Butler Avenue, is just a half-block from the beach. Proprietress Sally Russell has created here an easy-going ambiance. The master suite, airy and spacious, features an elegant Jacuzzi tub; a second guest room has a private bathroom. Your choice of a Continental or full breakfast awaits you each morning, a two-night minimum stay is required, and the high season rates are $150 and $100, respectively.

The **17th Street Inn**, ☎ 912-786-0607, fax 786-0602, owned and operated by Susie Morris, is also a half-block from the beach. It offers a choice of suites furnished with antique iron beds. Value lovers will find particularly attractive the fact that each room has a fully furnished kitchen, some with table and chairs. For those who are of a mind to eat outside, three grills

await your culinary artistry and tables and chairs are set out on the decks. Summer rates are between $110 and $125 per night. Check their website at www.tybeeisland.com/lodging/17thstreetinn.

Tables for Two

Savannah

The **So' Soleil**, ☎ 912-234-1212, One West Broughton Street, operates in a 19th-century Mercantile building within the Historic District under the direction of English chef and owner Ian Winslade and his wife, Gypsie. Avoiding heavy sauces and extreme seasonings, Ian employs a more subtle approach to cooking. The resulting combination of ingredients, flavorings and textures yields a cuisine that is most accurately described as French-Mediterranean. On the menu, which changes seasonally, you will find a range of appetizers, priced at $5 to $10, that may include a salad of Sliced Cucumbers, Baby Lettuces and Preserved Ginger, tossed in house vinaigrette; Crispy Calamari, with caper and tomato remoulade; or Truffled Angel Hair Pasta, with Oregon Chanterelles. Entrées, priced at $15 to $23, could include Five-Spiced Grouper, in rosemary broth with bok choy and glass noodles; Intensified Tomatoes, Spinach, Leeks and Portobellos, tossed with saffron pasta ribbons and herb pesto; and a particular favorite of ours, Pan-Seared Jumbo Scallops, with mixed squash and crab wontons in a kaffir lime curry broth with cilantro oil. The wine list is varied, offers many selections by the glass, and has been personally chosen by Ian to complement his gourmet creations. So' Soleil is open for dinner Monday through Thursday from 6 to 10 pm, Friday and Saturday from 6 to 11 pm and Sunday from 6 to 9 pm. Lunch is served on Monday through Saturday from 11:30 am to

2:30 pm and Sunday brunch is on offer from 11:30 am to 3 pm. Appropriate dress is smart casual, and handicapped patrons will have easy access.

Another modern-minded and eclectic restaurant, the **Sapphire Grill**, ☎ 912-443-9962 or e-mail reservations@sapphiregrill.com, is at 110 West Congress Street near the Savannah City Market. This brainchild of Chef Chris Nason and his partner Geoffrey Batton offers dining in rooms of differing characters on two floors of a Savannah Greybrick Building. The first floor, decorated with stainless steel and glass accented with deep sapphire hues, exudes an ambiance of energy. The second floor is subdued, quieter and imbued with romance. The cuisine is imaginative. Appetizers, in the $9 to $10 range, might include unusual combinations like Sapphire Jumbo Lump Crab and Lobster Cakes, with candied Orange Lobster Coral Aioli, Sweet Golden Tomato Confit and Watercress Flags; or Roasted Littleneck Clams, Escargot and Wilted Arugula, Golden Tomato Vinaigrette and Champagne Butter. The impressive variety of seafood, veal, lamb, beef and vegetable dishes varies in price between $13 and $26. Look for such specialties as Seared Jumbo Diver Scallops, White Shrimp, Lobster & Prince Edward Island Mussels, Champagne Spinach Broth, Teardrop Tomatoes, Peppered Linguine & Chive Essence or Seared Muscovy Duck Breast, Grilled Local Shrimp & Diced Foie Gras Tossed with Champagne Basil Cream, Griddled Sunburst Squash & Baby Spinach Leaves over Lemon Angel Hair. The selective wine list is comprised of generally American vintages, but some Australian, French, Italian, New Zealand and Spanish bottles are added into the mix. The Sapphire Grill is open for dinner Monday through Thursday from 6 to 10:30 pm and Saturday and Sunday from 5:30 to 11 pm. Reservations are recommended.

An altogether more exotic ambiance can be found at the **Casbah Moroccan Restaurant**, ☎ 912-234-6168, www.casbahrestaurant.com, 118 East Broughton Street, between Abercorn and Drayton. Here, beneath an authentic Moroccan ceremonial tent décor, you will be entertained by captivating belly dancers and can experience genuine Moroccan cuisine. Starters, between $5 and $7, include Moroccan shlada (salad), kimrone (jumbo shrimp sautéed), and vegetarian bastila (vegetable pie). An enticing range of vegetable, lamb, beef, Cornish hen, chicken, fish and jumbo shrimp entrées, are priced at $12 to $21 and served with side dishes of couscous and saffron rice. Vegetables are a few dollars extra. Harissa, a Moroccan hot sauce, is available on request. From glancing around you may soon deduce that eating with the right hand is customary in Moroccan traditional families. Flatware, though, is available for those who prefer to use it. Before leaving, visit the **Marrakesh Bazaar**, where you will find typical Moroccan gifts and souvenirs. The Casbah Restaurant is open for dinner Tuesday to Sunday from 5:30 to 10:30 pm, and reservations are suggested.

Close in locale, but a continent apart in style is British-owned **Churchill's Pub**, ☎ 912-232-8501, the oldest bar in Savannah. Built in England around 1850, it was relocated to a home in Grand Central Station, New York City, until the 1920s. It was then transported to 9 Drayton Street in Savannah, where, before re-establishing itself as a traditional British pub, it endured stints as a dance club, restaurant, ice cream and soda shop, and country and western saloon. In 1997, it was featured in the acclaimed movie *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*. The ambiance, like the food, is as convincingly English as you will find this side of the Atlantic. And it is as great a place to stop in for a pint of English Ale as it is to have a meal. The menu is genuinely enticing. On offer are Mixed Grill at $9.95, Fish & Chips at $6.95 or $8.95, Bangers (sausages) & Mash at $6.95, Shepherd's Pie at $5.95, a Ploughman's Lunch (traditional mix of salad, cheddar cheese, Branston Pickle and pickled onions) at $7.95, Bubble & Squeak (mashed potatoes mixed with boiled cabbage with pieces of ham and turkey) at $5.95.

They also have Toad in the Hole (Yorkshire pudding stuffed with sausages and served with roasted potatoes and vegetables) at $6.95, or Roast Beef and Yorkshire Pudding at $7.95. Of course, if you so desire, there are a variety of starters, salads, American dishes, sandwiches and sides on the menu. While waiting for your meal or between sips of ale, you may want to try your hand at darts. Churchill's Pub is open on Monday to Saturday from 11:30 am to 2 am and on Sunday between 5 and 2 am, with dinner served until 10 pm.

The **Bistro Savannah – Fresh Market Cuisine**, ☎ 912-233-6266, located in the Historic Market Area at 309 West Congress Street, has earned a reputation as a leading seafood restaurant, although other tastes are accommodated. Starters, usually ranging from $5.95 to $8.95, include such delicacies as Sautéed Shrimp & Tasso, Mussels Provençale, and Roasted Garlic Tartines. Main dishes, between $14.95 and $21.95, include particularly tempting plates such as BBQ Local Black Grouper, Potato-Crusted Salmon, Bouillabaisse of Coastal Seafood, and Crispy Roast Duck. The Bistro Savannah is open for dinner Sunday through Thursday from 6 to 10:30 pm and Friday and Saturday from 5:30 to 11 pm. Reservations are accepted.

The **Shrimp Factory**, ☎ 912-236-4229, fax 233-0011, www.shrimpfactory.com, makes its home in an early 18th-century warehouse which overlooks the harbor. It is found at 313 East River Road, two blocks east of the Hyatt Regency Hotel. Not surprisingly, the specialty is shrimp – served in as many different ways as you can imagine. Also look for native fish, live Maine lobsters and, for non-seafood lovers, a selection of filet mignon, chicken sauté, pork au poivre and pasta dishes. Pine Bark Stew, signature breads, the famous Caesar-Style Salad tossed at your tableside, and desserts – including a Bananas Foster Flambé – round out the list of house specialties. The Shrimp Factory is open Monday to Thursday from 11 am to 10 pm, Friday and Saturday from 11 am to 11 pm and Sunday from midday to 10 pm. Lunch is served until 4 pm and dinner from 4 pm to close.

The **125 River House Seafood & Bakery**, ☎ 912-234-1900, 800-317-1912, fax 234-7007 and www.riverhouseseafood.com, 125 West River Street, is just west of the Hyatt Regency Hotel. This has been operating since 1982 in a restored 1850s "King Cotton" warehouse. Appetizers, the cost of which includes a basket of River House Bread, range from $6.95 to $9.95. Oysters, Jumbo Sea Scallops, a Calamari Platter and Seafood Strudel are but a few of the enticing choices. Entrées generally cost between $16.95 and $22.95 and feature Shrimp, Deviled Crab, Rainbow Trout, Mahi Mahi, Sea Bass, Grouper, Salmon and a variety of beef, pork, chicken and duck dishes. Next door and also overlooking the river, is the **River House Bakery**, also affectionately known as the Pecan Pie & Cheesecake Co. During the 1980s, the River House management decided to capitalize on the popularity of its Pecan Pies and Cheesecakes by opening a bakery. Since that time, the mail order business has flourished. Wrapped tightly in cellophane and protected inside a specially designed shipping carton, these pies and cakes are shipped throughout the continental US. A gift that is unique and convenient and for which one size really does "fit all," what more could you ask for? The folks at the River House Bakery will happily take your order for friends and relatives.

The **Gryphon Tea Room**, ☎ 912-238-2481, Savannah College of Art and Design, 337 Bull Street, has a character unique not only to Savannah, but also to any other town that we have visited. The charming old-world décor, including a small internal dome, is certainly conducive to a relaxing cup of tea. And the variety of choices is great, whatever the time of day. You may enjoy the beverage alone or as served with any number of goodies, including scones, served with cream and jam of course, tea sandwiches, tea sweets, and/or assorted pastries and sweet delights. But there are other attractions here than tea. Coffees are available, as are bakery delicacies, salads, and deli sandwiches. We would also recommend that you take a look at the very special teapots that are on display. The Gryphon Tea Room is open Monday to Friday from 8:30 am to 9:30 pm and on Saturday from 10 am to 9:30 pm.

Tybee Island

The **Crab Shack**, ☎ 912-786-9857, Estill Hammock Road, is a really neat place to eat. The ambiance is aptly described in their advertisements, "Where The Elite Eat In Their Bare Feet." To be honest, a visit here may leave you humming "Margaritaville". It goes without saying that crabs, prepared in a medley of ways, are featured on the menu, as are all other kinds of seafood.

> *Our Suggestion: Try the Shack Specialty, "Capt'n Crab's Sampler," a platter piled high with an assortment of tasty, in-season shellfish served with corn, potatoes and sausage. This costs $29.99 for two.*

The Crab Shack is open Monday to Thursday from 11:30 am to 10 pm and Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 11:30 am to 11 pm.

Shops, Spas, etc.

You will no doubt have gleaned by now that, for us there is something special about red roses. In fact, from our first Saturday date over 25 years ago, whenever we have been together, there is a tradition that Norman starts each Saturday morning off with a gift of a single red rose. In fact, when we remarried in 1995, on a Saturday morning, Kathy carried a single red rose, a Bible and a small antique tin box painted with a single rose that Norman had sent as gift for a Saturday when we were apart. You may have a different floral tradition, or, perhaps, it is time to begin one. Whatever you are in the market for in the way of flowers, the helpful staff at **Ramelle's Florist**, ☎ 912-234-2261, 2007 Abercorn Street, will be delighted to lend their assistance.

Perhaps you have had a stressful week and are in need of rejuvenation. At 5212 Paulsen Street, there is a luxury day spa that has as its stated mission "to make you look and feel your best." The qualified and professional staff at the **Rejuvena-**

tion Center prides itself on quality and service – which grows out of the dedication of the staff to fulfilling your needs and desires. The choice of treatments here is as comprehensive as you are likely to find. These include facials, body treatments, hand and foot treatments, cosmetic services, hair removal, nail services, body massage, hydrotherapy, and a host of packages which offer a combination of the above and can be custom-designed to your specifications. Whether you have 30 minutes and a limited budget, or a full day and healthy resources, there is something at the Rejuvenation Center to suit your need.

Our Suggestion: The spa experience is not just for ladies. Why not make this a couple's outing and book both of you for a Rejuvenation Retreat? Designed for men and women, this package incorporates the ultimate in skin and body treatments into a true mini-vacation just short of traveling to a destination spa. Your day will begin with a facial, followed by Balmeotherapy (a warm bath that combines the benefits of hydrotherapy and the ancient healing power of essential oils to fight stress) and a Body Treatment. Then it's on to a Swedish Massage and a Deluxe Spa Manicure and Pedicure with paraffin application. Finally, to have you both looking your best for your evening together, a blow dry and style will be followed by a make-up application for ladies and an eyebrow grooming for gentlemen. A spa lunch, served in the quiet room, is included in the price of $280 per person.

On the side of practicalities you should be aware that reservations for Spa Day Packages must be guaranteed with either a credit card number or a gift certificate number, a 48-hour cancellation policy is in effect and most major credit cards are welcome. For additional information or to obtain a booking, ☎ 912-355-3972.

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